DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 404 652		CS 215 746

AUTHOR	Thompson, Isabelle K., Ed.
TITLE	Alabama English, 1989-1996.
INSTITUTION	Alabama Council of Teachers of English; Auburn Univ., Ala. Cooperative Extension Service.
PUB DATE	96
NOTE	945p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Jacksonville State University, English Department, Jacksonville, AL 36265 ($10).
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022)
JOURNAL CIT	Alabama English; v1-8 1989-96
EDRS PRICE	MF06/PC38 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Annotated Bibliographies; Art History; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; Poetry; *Reading Instruction; Research Papers (Students); Teaching Methods; World War II; Writing Assignments; *Writing Evaluation; *Writing Instruction
IDENTIFIERS	*Alabama; *Regional Literature; United States (Gulf Coast States)

ABSTRACT

These 1989-1996 issues of "Alabama English" contain articles that address current theory and practice in the teaching of reading, writing, and literature at any grade level. The first two issues focus specifically on the teaching of writing. The third issue is a special issue featuring Alabama authors, while the fourth issue presents articles on a variety of topics--from writing tutorials to multilingual book corners. The fifth issue addresses the following questions: "What is Education?"; "What is worth knowing?"; and "How can teachers invite students to become active participants in the learning process?" The sixth issue is devoted to literature in the classroom. The seventh issue is a double issue, presenting a variety of articles diverse in topic and type. The eighth issue, also double, considers the theme of diversity. The ninth issue addresses noncanonical literature, while the tenth focuses on Alabama women writers. The last issue of the run contains articles on folktales, children's literature, teaching difficult materials, and Shakespeare's "As You Like It." Some issues contain teaching tips and book reviews. (AA)

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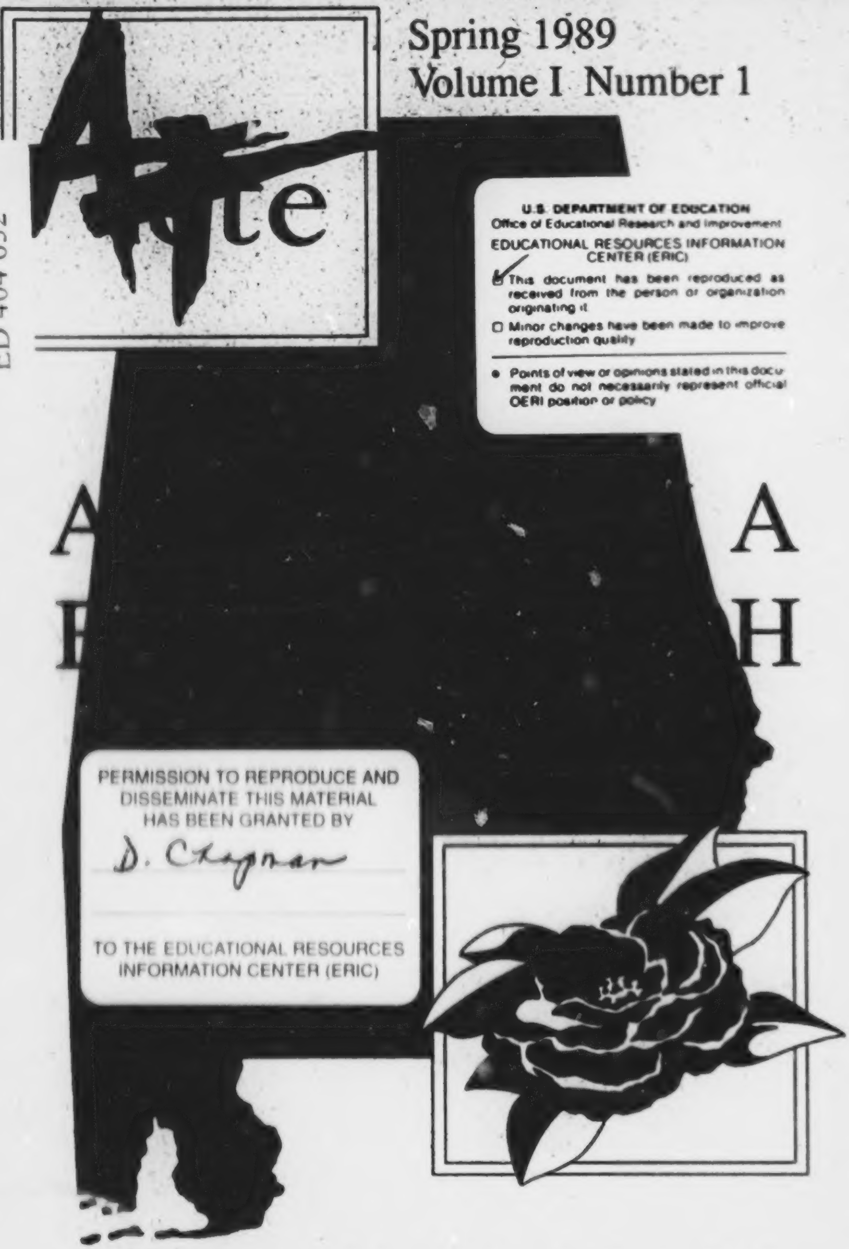
Spring 1989
Volume I Number 1

ED 404 652



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A Publication of the Alabama Council of
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ALABAMA ENGLISH

A Publication of the Alabama Council of Teachers of English
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the Department of English

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Subscriptions: Subscription to *Alabama English* is included in the annual ACTE membership dues renewed each fall. To join the ACTE and receive a subscription to *Alabama English*, send your name, address, and school affiliation along with a check for $10.00 to Dana King Basinger, 2620 Alta Vista Circle, Birmingham, Alabama 35243. *Alabama English* will be published twice a year, spring and fall.

Submissions: *Alabama English* welcomes manuscripts from 1250 to 4000 words long about current theory and practice in the teaching of reading, writing, and literature at any grade level; manuscripts approximately 1000 words long as "teaching tips"; and poetry and short essays. All manuscripts should be typed double space, and three copies should be submitted. For return of manuscript, enclose a self-addressed envelope with stamps attached by a paper clip. Send submissions to Isabelle Thompson, Editor, *Alabama English*, Department of English, Auburn University, Alabama 36849. Suggestions for book reviews should be sent to the review editors.

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ALABAMA ENGLISH

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Editor's Introduction

Isabelle Thompson

Welcome to the inaugural issue of *Alabama English*. I hope you find as much pleasure in reading this issue as the staff and I had in putting it together. As much enjoyment as I had working with the submissions for this historic first issue, I must confess nevertheless that when I tried to write the introduction, I found myself paralyzed by writer's block. Although I knew that our readers would want to read about the goals of this new journal, I could not decide on an appropriate style. How should the voice of the editor of *Alabama English* sound? Finally, I decided to try breaking the writer's block by writing a series of introductions, each in a different style, hoping to find the right one. In the spirit of fun and as a possible comment on the nature of the writing process, I offer three of these.

One approach to the first issue of *Alabama English* could be a straightforward statement of purpose for the journal.

> The purpose of *Alabama English* is to bring together English and language arts teachers at all grade levels and from all sections of the state. It will achieve its purpose (1) by providing a professional forum for those teachers who wish to publish their ideas about the latest educational theory and practice and (2) by disseminating those ideas to interested readers.

The voice here is very distant--as official and inhuman as an introduction to the new tax laws. Another approach might aim for more drama, or, at least, flair.

> Less than a year ago, the ACTE board decided to bring to fruition its long-held dream of establishing a professional journal. The hope of this journal is to unite English and language arts teachers from across Alabama--to have college professors sit down with kindergarten teachers and to have teachers from Mobile and Bay Minette converse with those from Huntsville and Jasper. The greater goals are to help stamp out illiteracy, make school children life-long readers, develop a sense of professional pride and well-being among English and language arts teachers statewide, and persuade the Governor to increase teachers' salaries by at least 15% next fall.

I am far too realistic to feel comfortable with such a grand voice. Since this is the first issue, maybe an advertising voice would be appropriate.

> Are you tired of doing the same old thing in your classroom day after day, year after year? Are you looking for new ways to improve your teaching? Are you looking for a place to publish your best lessons? Such a deal we

have for you! For only a few dollars you get all this and more.

I cannot sustain the advertising voice for long. I am a teacher, not a salesperson. Maybe you can help me with my dilemma. How do you think *Alabama English* should be introduced? If you were editor, what voice would you assume? Send me your introduction to *Alabama English*. If the reviewers agree, I will publish a series of alternative introductions in the next issue. Perhaps together we can get this introduction right.

What is in this issue?

This first issue of *Alabama English* concentrates on the teaching of writing to a range of students, from first graders to college students. The most important concern is to explore and evaluate the currently fashionable process approach to writing instruction. With some argumentative and others confessional, the articles point out the benefits and limitations of this approach. Regardless of grade level, the writers all sing the same song--a lyric complaining of the unnatural constraints on learning imposed by the classroom and looking for ways to make writing instruction meaningful by considering the needs and interests of students. They face many of the same problems of bored students and unrealistic measures of accountability as well as the huge investment of time required to teach writing well. The problems of the elementary school also plague the college, and an instructional approach that works well with first graders will probably also appeal to college freshmen.

What is to come?

Although this issue concentrates on the teaching of writing, future issues of *Alabama English* will be more comprehensive. We intend to publish articles on all aspects of English and language arts studies, including the teaching of reading and literature as well as writing. We will also be pleased to receive rebuttals and addenda to any of the articles appearing in this issue.

Please let us hear from you. Tell us what you think of this first issue. Tell us what you would like to read about in future issues. Tell us what is happening in your corner of the professional world.

Confessions of an Inveterate Theme-Grader

Edward P.J. Corbett

This paper was delivered at the October 1986 New Hampshire Conference.

Edward P.J. Corbett has been Professor of English at Ohio State University since 1966. He was chair of the Conference on College Composition and Communication in 1970 and editor of College Composition and Communication *from 1974 to 1979. Besides the well-known* Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student, *Corbett has written* The Little English Handbook, *now in its fifth edition, and along with Gary Tate, is editor of* The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook. *In 1989, we can expect the publication of* The Selected Essays of Edward P.J. Corbett, *edited by Robert J. Connors.*

Like most long-time teachers of composition, I feel as though I have been reading, annotating, and grading student papers for eons. Veteran teachers feel that way because reading and evaluating student papers is time-consuming and exhausting. It is a safe generalization that English teachers, by and large, do more writing on student papers than any other teachers. We may occasionally have written more words in the marginal spaces of a paper than the student wrote. It is mainly because of all that writing we do on student papers that English teachers do less writing for publication than science teachers do and that English teachers have few weekends free of school work.

Sometimes in our spells of depleted energy, we dream of how pleasant our jobs would be if we did not have to write cautionary and inquisitive and corrective and evaluative words on student papers. Why do we not revolt? Why do we not cast aside our red pencils and declare that we are only going to read and put a grade on student papers? Why are we so anally compulsive about annotating student papers?

Well, speak for yourself, Ed Corbett. *You* are the one who is anally compulsive about annotating student papers. Don't accuse others of *your* compulsion. There may be others as bad as you are, but wait until you get evidence that others *are* as bad before you start daubing them with your tarbrush. As the Scriptures say, "Judge not that you be not judged." Confess your own sins, Corbett, and mutter your *mea culpa*'s but don't be pointing an accusing finger at others.

Recognizing that this advice is just and sensible, I will talk only about my own sins, and let you categorize yourselves as you deem fit.

So let me display my scarlet letter right at the outset. **I AM A COMPULSIVE ANNOTATOR OF STUDENT THEMES**. I am not flaunting my sin; I am revealing it. I am not proud of my sin, but I am uncertain about whether I am ashamed of it. Maybe I can achieve my catharsis by talking frankly about my sin--if it is a sin. You can see my confusion: I have told you what I do, but already I am ambivalent about whether what I do is right or wrong. Maybe I'd better abandon the metaphor of the confessional and shift to the metaphor of the psychiatrist's couch. Just talk about my obsession and just see what emerges from all the probing of my *id* and my *ego*.

As far back as I can remember, I resented my father's intrusions into my mother's space. No, No! I don't need to go back that far into my psychic roots. Let me just go back to the time when I began my teaching career. Fresh out of graduate school, with splendid training in how to read and talk about literature but with no training at all in how to teach composition, I got a teaching job at a university where, in my first semester, I was assigned to teach one section of a survey course in English literature and four sections of freshman composition. I know that I had more than 100 students in those four sections of composition, because the standard load per section in those days was 30 students. I won't tell you about the godawful things I did in those composition classrooms, but I will tell you what I did to those 100 or more themes I got every week. I graded the hell out of them.

I was well prepared by my training in grade school and high school to pounce on errors of grammar, punctuation, mechanics, and spelling. In grade school, I had a teacher who was a whiz at diagramming sentences, and she made all her students whizzes at diagramming. In high school, I had a teacher who was so punitive in grading papers that had any sentence errors in them that I never again inadvertently produced a Sentence Fragment in anything I wrote after the first two weeks of that high school English class. Although I had been well prepared by my literary training to make judgments about the substance of poems, plays, and stories, I did not at the time have the formal training in rhetoric that enabled me to make judgments about the substance and the organization of non-fictional texts. So I slashed away at the features of the written texts that I knew were unequivocably wrong: the comma splices, the vague pronoun references, the mismatched subjects and predicates, the missing apostrophes, the misplaced commas, and the typos and the misspelled words. Since I used a red pencil in those days, I figuratively left droplets of my blood on virtually every page of every paper. I was exhausted after the hours and hours I spent bleeding over the four sets of themes I got every week, but I felt good. I felt that I had done a good job of correcting those error-laden papers and that I had earned my pay for that week. I remember that I slept well in those days.

There was no policy in our freshman program of allowing students to revise their papers or to submit drafts of their papers that would not be graded, and with over 100 papers to grade every week, I certainly was not going to institute such a policy in my classes. Knowing where I came from and realizing the situation in which I was caught up, you may be able to understand, if not forgive me for, what I did to those poor kids in those days. If I developed bad habits in those early days, you must realize that I was only one of hundreds of teachers who developed those bad habits. Even when one gets born again, the bad habits are hard to get rid of.

And I was born again, many times, since those novitiate years. My first rebirth occurred when I discovered, quite fortuitously, the great tradition of rhetoric. That discovery was my miracle on the road to Damascus. I was not just converted by that experience; I was radically re-oriented. I finally learned how to read prose texts and to make judgments about the content, the organization, and the style of those texts. I learned that writing was a process as well as a product. In time, I learned all those other wonderful things about writing: that writing was more of a recursive or continually looping process than a linear process; that writing was basically a messy process that had to be cleaned up by lots of reworking; that writing was not a monolithic, lockstep process but a process that permitted a variety of approaches or techniques; that writing was an instrument for discovering meaning as well as an instrument for transmitting meaning. I am a slow-learner by nature; but because I was docile--in the root meaning of that word--I gradually learned what I should have learned before I stepped into my first composition classroom.

My second rebirth was not a cataclysmic experience; it was the result of a long, drawn-out period of education by my peers. Some of that education came from teachers of my generation, but most of it came from younger teachers, the young people who are already luminaries on the composition scene. I have heard the convention talks and read the journal articles of respected teachers and authors such as Nancy Sommers, David Bartholomae, Nancy Atwell, Cy Knoblauch and Lil Brannon, Don Murray, Sarah Freedman, Ellen Nold, and Elaine Maimon. And I nod my head vigorously in agreement when they say that we should allow and encourage our students to write and submit multiple drafts that will not be graded; that we should make it possible for our students to read their drafts to their classmates and to get feedback from them that will guide the writing of the next draft; that we should not mark, and certainly should not grade for, mechanical errors because the errors in many sections of the draft may simply disappear when the students revise the draft; that if we do mark mechanical errors, we should not mark everything, because a heavily marked paper overwhelms and discourages students; and that the tone of any notations scribbled on a paper should be gentle and suggestive rather than sarcastic and peremptory. I invariably agree with sound advice of that sort, and yet when I sit down to the next batch of papers from my students, I persist in my meticulous and comprehensive system of annotating the papers. Why?

I have been searching for answers to that provocative *why* for some time now. I think that any of us who continue to be compulsive annotators of student papers should ask ourselves why we do what we do--especially if we agree with much of the advice we have been getting from some of our enlightened teachers. To persist in our habits when intellectually we have been convinced that those habits are counter-productive is a strange kind of perversity. Maybe we have really not been convinced; maybe we find the advice sensible but still see some overriding reasons--or at least good reasons--for grading papers *our* way. But maybe we are just irrationally resistant to change.

In my case, I think that the obstinacy of ingrained habit goes a great way toward explaining my persistence in a habit that I have frequently in recent years suspected of being counter-productive. When I am reading a student paper, the pencil in my hand literally twitches. I expect to find errors, I do find errors, and I feel obliged to underscore those errors. If I go a paragraph or two without pouncing on an error, my twitching pencil becomes positively spasmodic. Surely, I am missing something. My attention is flagging. Maybe I should get up and do some deep kneebends or drink a cup of coffee. Whenever I become conscious that I have slipped into this captious disposition, I realize why we English teachers have the widespread reputation of being fault-finders. We have all had the experience of being introduced as an English teacher and getting the response, "Oh-oh, I'd better watch my language."

Can I break this deeply ingrained habit of mine? In all fairness to myself, I must say that I have mellowed considerably over the years. For instance, I no longer mark a paper with a red pencil because I have come to realize how traumatic that color is for most students. I now mark papers with black lead. Something written in black lead comes on very gently. And besides, I want to be able to erase the errors in wording that I frequently make when I write notes in the margin.

I have mellowed in other ways too. I now try very hard not to write caustic remarks on student papers. In my younger, callow days, I thought I was being very clever and hip when I could scribble a witty or sarcastic remark in the margin of a student paper. I had visions of groups of students gleefully sharing with one another the verbal ripostes I had enscribed on their papers that week. I would become one of the campus legends: the Oscar Wilde of the relentless theme-graders. "Listen to the way Old Bloodletter gored me this week." I eventually learned that students are more likely to be crushed than amused by the withering remarks we write on their papers. I now strive for gentleness rather than witticism.

But I am still scribbling all over student papers. I mark every error in grammar, usage, punctuation, mechanics, and spelling. Nothing seems to escape my eagle eye--except the errors that I myself inadvertently make in my marginal annotations. Can I account for this compulsion? Can I justify it? I might be able to account for the compulsion by attributing it to ingrained habit. I may not be able to justify the compulsion, but I can rationalize it. I keep telling myself that if I were to overlook some of the mechanical errors and concentrate on just a few errors or on just substantive matters, I might give the students the impression that in revising that paper or in writing the next paper, they need to "fix up" only those errors or the kinds of error that I had marked in the paper. If, for instance, I marked only the most flagrant misspellings in a paper, the student might be lulled into a delusion about the state of his or her spelling. "Golly, I must be improving. Last week I had 18 spelling errors in my paper; this week I had only seven." I suppose that what I am implying by this rationalization is that I do not trust the student to be able to detect any errors that I do not point out. Am I being unduly pessimistic about my students' linguistic vigilance?

That is the crucial question. Those teachers who are not anally compulsive about underscoring *every* error they detect in student papers justify their policy of selective annotation by saying that we can help our students mature only by shifting the responsibility for detecting and correcting errors to them. This philosophical difference in the two most prominent views that teachers profess about the capability and the responsibility of their students is comparable to the profound difference of opinion that Bernard Mandeville and the Earl of Shaftesbury entertained in the eighteenth century about whether people were naturally inclined to good or to evil. I guess that until I can acquire the confidence that my students are able or disposed to find and correct the surface errors in what they have written, I will go on marking *all* the errors I detect.

But when I confess to being persnickety about pouncing on all the slips I find in student papers, I do not want to give the impression that in my grading of papers, I assign a disproportionate weight to surface errors. I must admit that there was a time when I did assign a disproportionate weight to surface errors. In my novitiate years as a teacher, I adopted the policy of that punitive high school teacher I had: I gave an automatic F to any paper that contained even one Sentence Fragment, one Comma Splice, or one Fused

Sentence. I educed a lot of tears by adopting that policy, but with that vindictive practice, I did produce legions of students who never or rarely wrote another SF or CS or FS in anything they wrote. But I must confess now that I think the tears were too heavy a price for the cure.

And because I became conscience-stricken about all the tears I had wrung out of my students, I reformed my grading policies: I reset my priorities in a justifiable hierarchy. Rhetoric too helped me put my values in proper proportion. In determining a grade for a paper, I still take into consideration the number and the seriousness of the surface errors I found. But that criterion does not carry undue weight in my deliberations about the grade.

My annotations let students know unequivocally that some of their verbs do not agree with their subjects, that there are a shocking number of typos in the paper, and that the paper is heavily laden with lackluster *to be* verbs, but if the ideas are fresh and an authentic voice rings out in the paper, if the ideas are adequately developed and coherently arranged, and if the style of the paper is crisp and lively and engaging, the accumulation of surface errors does not make much of a dent in the final grade on the paper. Even if the paper does not display a prominent degree of those substantive and stylistic excellences, the aggregate of the surface errors does not usually put a big dent in the grade. I have often given an A or an A-minus to a paper that I have virtually obliterated with my annotations. In the case of exceptionally good writers, I feel that they can profit from, and that they may actually welcome, notations about some of the finer points of writing. The A-students frequently thank me for my meticulous and sometimes picayunish annotations. And come to think of it, a surprising number of C-students have thanked me too. What students really resent is the teacher who etches a letter-grade on the paper but never enscribes a single accusative or laudatory comment anywhere on the paper. I would be bitter too.

Although I have attempted here to justify or rationalize some of my practices in annotating and evaluating student papers, I would not vigorously try to convince others to adopt my practices, and I certainly would not hold myself up as a model for others to emulate. My twitching pencil will probably not come to rest until I heave up my last sigh. Despite my admiration for the young teachers whose practices and theories of grading have won my notional assent, I probably will persist in my obsessive and excessive way of marking student papers. As the old saying goes, "You can't teach an old dog new tricks." I will continue to sniff out errors and pee on them. But there is no reason the rest of you have to follow my example. There is an old bluegrass song entitled "I Saw the Light." See the light, and be enlightened.

The ABC of Discourse

Peter Huggins
Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama

When the critic says
Our children can't read,
They don't know how,
I think Ezra might have roared
His approval. He'd have said
I told them that years ago,
But when you live in a madhouse,
You have to shout to be heard.

But I remember Ezra,
Rattling his wire cage
In Pisa, screaming obscenities
At the allies and the partisans,
Silenced by the cricket
Singing in the dry grass.

Big Daddy, Stark Young: Oxford, Mississippi, 1950

Peter Huggins
Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama

In the photograph my sister plays
Across the street from Stark Young's house.
When she kicks a ball onto his porch,
Stark calls her in for milk and cookies.
She's fascinated by his Boston ferns,
The lily pattern in his china.
He gives her a cutting from one
Of the ferns and sends her on her way.
She meets Big Daddy on the street.
He says come inside. He has something
For her, he says. She ignores him.
She knows his milk and cookies are more
Than they seem. He's a man, she says,
Who has too many cats for his own good.
She is no cat. She kicks her ball
Down the street and waves to Mr. Faulkner,
Divebombing the town in his Steerman.
Flying on guts and more than a little
Whiskey he's some act up there in the sky.

A Principal's View of Teaching Writing on the Elementary Level

Gloria Solomon

Gloria Solomon is principal of Hewitt Elementary School, a K-4 school of 1200 students in Jefferson County. Before moving to Hewitt Elementary School in 1986, she was principal at Hilview Elementary School, a K-6 school. She has published in Kappa Delta Pi's The Record, Principal, Wingspan, North Central Association Quarterly, Alabama Reader, *and* Principals' Center Newsletter: Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Over the past six years or more, schools have been criticized for the poor job they have been doing in teaching children how to write adequately. At the two schools where I have been principal during this time, we have taken the criticisms and recommendations for improvement quite seriously. *Becoming a Nation of Readers*--a companion study to *A Nation at Risk*, a report on the status of reading and writing instruction disseminated by the U.S. Department of Education--led the way for improvements in teaching writing with the following recommendation: "One of the most effective ways for children to learn about written language is for them to write themselves" (6).

None of the 55 teachers at my school disagrees that we need to do a better job producing more literate citizens. The disagreements that exist here and elsewhere are about how to do the job. Compounding the difficulty are the opinions of teachers who are on different wavelengths and varying developmental levels, all with differing opinions about how to remedy the problems.

The first step in solving any problem, however, is to determine exactly what the problem is. Our understanding of the problem begins with the eye-opening realization that what we are combating here at our K-4 school with an enrollment of 1200 is boredom. As Lucy McCormick Calkins, Columbia University teacher and author, says in *The Art of Teaching Writing*:

> But in our schools, our students tell us they don't want to write. They need not bother to tell us; we can feel their apathy as they crank out stories that are barely adequate. (3)

What then are the particular problems, questions, and challenges on the elementary level in the teaching of writing?

Should we emphasize writing process or product?

Many teachers who graduated from college more than eight years ago are probably as unfamiliar with the process approach as I was before attending Columbia University's Institute on the Teaching of Writing in 1984. Many of those unfamiliar with the concepts promoted by Lucy Calkins, Donald

Graves, and Donald Murray have not had firsthand experience with the process approach and, therefore, automatically reject the idea as being frivolous.

Many teach just as they were taught. A topic is assigned. Less than 10 minutes later, everyone begins to write, and at the end of the class period, students turn in the finished product, which is then graded by the teacher. The teacher assigns topics, finds the errors in what the students write in response to the topic, and corrects them. Traditional teachers teach a "recipe" approach to writing. This approach is easily mastered by the better students; yet those who learn best do not necessarily write well. Often their pieces have no voice. There is a noticeable stiffness even though the piece is technically correct.

With the process approach, students learn early that writing is a cyclical process. Part of the time writers are composing. Sometimes in the middle of composing they switch to editing. And often, writers write on two or three topics at the same time.

In the process-oriented classroom, the teacher writes along with the students. A community of writers develops. The writers enrich each other's lives with their shared experiences, feelings, and talents. A special warmth of kinship develops, and the members of the classroom community relate to each other and to the teacher differently from those in a classroom where the "recipe" approach is taught. Writing strategies to last a lifetime are practiced. These strategies will encourage the learners to be independent when they leave the classroom.

What many people do not understand about the process-oriented classroom is that there is high student input and high teacher input. Contrary to current myth, teachers certainly do teach, but their lessons come from student needs rather than from predetermined plans. Yes, the students do have ownership, but the teacher, as the expert, guides them by well-timed tips and mini-lessons.

Can control of learning be shared with students?

When interviewing applicants for a teaching position, I always ask them to describe an ideal teacher or to explain how teachers can assure that learning takes place in their classrooms. Responses include a wide variety of approaches, but usually they can be filed in two main categories: the teacher as dispenser of information and the teacher as facilitator. What I look for are teachers who see the importance of balancing the dispenser and facilitator roles to help students develop into independent learners.

Strong advocates of the dispenser of information view of teaching often reject the facilitator role. They are the ones who often have difficulty using any methods that include sharing control. The process approach to teaching writing, for example, rests on the premise that control needs to be in the hands of the writer. Common opposition to what seems threatening in even the suggestion that teachers abdicate control, sounds like this: "How can the teacher be assured that children learn and master the objectives of the course of studies if the students are in control of their own learning?" Negative reactions to sharing control usually stem from a strong sense of teacher responsibility: "I would be derelict in my duties if I turned over learning and even teaching to my students."

Those who know that a lifelong zest for learning more likely comes from involvement and engagement than from teacher control of learning have no problem sharing control with their students. These teachers are convinced the moment they first see and hear their students' energy levels increase with increased involvement. They realize that in the average classroom 30 individuals with varying talents and experiences are chomping at the bit to share and assist one another, thus freeing the teacher for interaction with other children.

How can we assure that students master the mechanics of writing?

The writing of students in classrooms where mechanics are stressed first rather than last is substantially less interesting than the writing of those in classes where the emphasis is first placed on content. Those who think their students cannot even begin to write until they master capitalization, ending punctuation, and subject-verb agreement are putting the emphasis on elements that often discourage and bore students before enthusiasm and engagement have had a chance to take root. As cited in *Becoming a Nation of Readers*:

> Research suggests that the finer points of writing, such as punctuation and subject-verb agreement, may be learned best while students are engaged in extended writing that has the purpose of communicating a message to an audience. (20)

The Alabama State Course of Studies in Language Arts does not clearly favor writing practice as a means of teaching skills. It includes references to the importance of a process orientation in grades kindergarten and one, but beyond that, teaching mechanics, first and in isolation, takes precedence.

Many proponents of "mechanics-first" compare learning to write to learning to play the piano. They say that you cannot play until you learn to read the notes. I prefer to liken learning to write to learning to talk. No one hearing youngsters say "da da" or "ma ma" tells them that they must say "daddy" or "mother" or say nothing. Children learn to talk by making successive approximations, by trail and error, and by constant practice. Yet everyone does eventually learn to talk naturally without formal instruction.

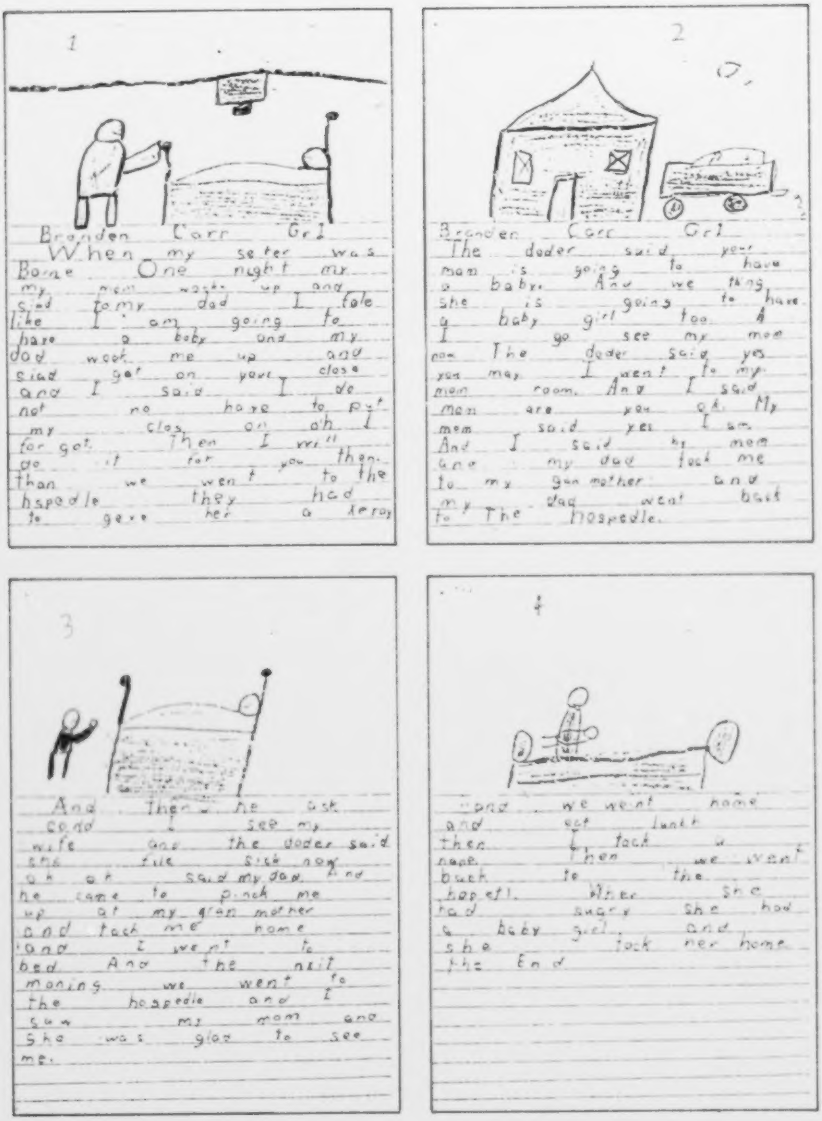
On the next page is an example of just one piece of writing by a first grader from a book compiled last May. All the pieces from other children in this class were equally authentic.

> Brandon Carr Gr. 1
> When my seter was Borne One night my my mom wocke up and siad to my dad I fale like I am going to have a baby and my dad wock me up and siad get on your close and I said I do not no hawe to put my clos on oh I forgot. Then I will do it for you then. than we went to the hspedle they had to geve her a X-ray. The doder said your mom is going to have a baby. And we thing she is going to have a baby girl too. A I go see my mom now. The doder said yes you may. I went to my mom room. And I said mom are you ok. My mom said yes I am. And I said by mom and my did took me tomy ganmother and my dad went back to the hospedle. And then he ask con'd I see my wife and the doder said she file sick now ok ok said my dad. And he came to pinck me up at my granmother and toch me home and I went to bed. And the nxit maning we went to the hospedle and I saw my mom and she was glad to see me. and we went home and eat lunch then I tock a nape. Then we went back to the hopetl. When she had sugry she had a baby girl and she tock her home. the End

Mechanics are important, but early emphasis on mechanics interferes with the child's thinking about his or her story.

How can we provide time for regularly scheduled writing instruction?

"Do you include writing three to five times a week in addition to journal writing?" I asked one teacher whose lesson plans did not seem to include writing.



1

Branden Carr Gr1
When my seter was
Borne One night mr
my mom woke up and
siad to my dad I fele
like I am going to
have a baby and my
dad woot me up and
siad get on your close
and I said I do
not no have to put
my clos on oh I
for got Then I will
go it for you then.
than we went to the
hspedle they had
to geve her a Xeray

2

Branden Carr Grl
The doder said your
mom is going to have
a baby. And we thing
she is going to have
a baby girl too. A
I go see my mom
now The doder said yes
you may I went to my
mom room. And I said
mom are you ok. My
mom said yes I am.
And I said by mom
and my dad tock me
to my gan mother and
my dad went back
to The hospedle.

3

And Then he ask
codd I see my
wife and the doder said
she fite sick now
oh ok said my dad. And
he came to pinck me
up at my gran mother
and tock me home
and I went to
bed And the nxit
moning we went to
the hospedle and I
saw my mom and
She was glad to see
me.

4

and we went home
and eat lunch
then I tock a
nape. Then we went
back to the
hopetl. When she
had suger She had
a baby girl. and
she tock her home
The End

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Here is a story written by Brandon, a first grader. The story is recopied, with Brandon's invented spelling, in the article.

"Sometimes I manage to fit in writing," she said, "but most times it has to be left out to make room for all the other subjects I have to teach."

Writing is often considered extra or frivolous or what you do to please the principal when time allows.

Teachers newly graduated from college usually have some acquaintance with multi-disciplinary teaching or webbing, but in the reality of classroom teaching, many fall into habits used by highly touted veteran teachers, especially those who are reputed to teach children with high test scores. After all, writing competence is not assessed except on the Alabama Basic Competency Test in third and sixth grades. And then, the type of writing assumed to be exemplary--one topic sentence and three or four supporting sentences--is at odds with real writing.

However, in our school with 55 teachers, 13 are including writing every day, and the quality of their students' writing is clearly superior to others of the same age in other classes. In following the writing development of those who show early promise in kindergarten or first-grade classes, we want them placed in classes throughout the grades where teachers nurture their love of and talent for writing. Fortunately for them, in our school with its 10 kindergartens and eight classes in every other grade, such accommodations can be made.

My hope is that the 13 teachers who use the process approach will serve as models for others who may in time become more interested in this approach to teaching writing. At the school where I served my first principalship, we tried asking every teacher on the staff to use the process approach. What I found was that as soon as I left the school, only five out of the 19 teachers on the staff continued what, no doubt, had seemed to them an uncomfortable and unnatural mode of teaching. I am convinced that teachers must use teaching styles that feel most comfortable to them; otherwise, they will attempt what is asked but not succeed. (Giving teachers a choice of methods to be used presupposes they are doing a good teaching job, of course.)

How can we prepare for standardized tests in a process-oriented classroom?

Teachers cannot deny that we are hostages to "respectable" test scores. Is there a way we can have a process-oriented class and still be sure the skills mandated by the Alabama State Department of Education, the school system's curriculum guides, and the Stanford Achievement Test objectives are learned? The answer to this question is "yes," although admittedly it is harder to keep track when you do not teach a predetermined curriculum and children are not expected to learn in a linear fashion. Teaching in a linear fashion, however, does not assure that your students have learned what you have been teaching.

It has been demonstrated that children learn the "necessary" skills as they work on their writing. Students will move on in the developmental process. In *Lessons from a Child*, for example, Lucy Calkins refers to a comparative study of two third-grade classes. Mrs. West, the third-grade teacher in one class taught mechanics out of the context of writing by using worksheets and punctuating demonstration sentences on the board. Mrs. Howard taught mechanics in connection with the process writing and even then just to the students who were in need of instruction. Calkins describes her study and the results:

> In my punctuation mark study, I asked each child from the two classrooms to tell me what each mark meant and how it was used. I found that Pat's (Mrs. Howard's) third graders could explain an average of more than eight kinds of punctuation. The children from Mrs. West's room,

who had studied punctuation through classwork, drills and tests, but had rarely written, were able to explain fewer than four kinds. (35)

Children interviewed in Mrs. Howard's room said they liked punctuation. Calkins quotes one child: "It lets you know where the sentence ends, so otherwise one minute you'd be sledding down the hill and the next minute you'd be inside the house, without even stopping" (35).

Mrs. West's children reacted less favorable to punctuation. Fewer than 25 percent enjoyed studying it. Again Calkins quotes a student: "Punctuation is embarrassing. You forget what it is for" (35).

I cannot say whether a follow-up study was or was not conducted, but I would wager a guess that those who learned skills in connection with the real task rather than in a fragmented fashion, remembered what they learned for a longer time.

How is reading literature related to writing improvement?

In 1982 the sixth grade in my school took part in a patriotism essay contest. The topic was "What Patriotism Means to Me." The children were asked to take part at the last moment, just days before the deadline. Their writing was done at home. The chairperson of the contest, sponsored by the local junior chamber of commerce, was one of the parents.

A few weeks after the contest ended, she came to see me. She said she was embarrassed by the quality of the entries from our school. She said they were no worse than the entries from the other local schools, but this was her child's school, and she had more of a personal interest in what was going on in our school. She said the essays had no substance. I was not surprised. After all, no one had even had time to discuss the concepts underlying patriotism, let alone expose the children to literature on the subject. How can you write intelligently about what you do not know, no matter how much you know about mechanics and style?

My thoughts were carried back a few years in time when I happened to notice, much to my surprise, that in our K-6 school, second graders' writing was more advanced than writing coming out of grades three through six. In investigating, I found that one of the two teachers was a gifted science teacher. She taught her students the scientific methods of inquiry and exposed them to literature and films in the field of science. As a result, their writing reflected the depth of their knowledge and understanding as well as their enthusiasm for the subject.

Nancie Atwell, the author of *In the Middle*, says, "Don Graves advises teachers to discover what we love of literature, to draw on our personal tastes and talents in the classroom" (200). Our cultural literacy and thinking are clearly reflected in our writing. How much do we know? How well can we take the various bits of knowledge from our reading and experiences and put them all together in a cohesive and meaningful whole so that our writing is an example of the quality of our thinking as well as our knowledge. Literature can enrich our understanding of the world. Equally as important, it can serve as the model for our own writing style.

How do we find time for grading writing?

As many teachers have already discovered, there is no need to grade every piece written. Yet, the teacher is expected to monitor progress and to assign grades as samples of students' educational achievement. When students are given the opportunity to select their best work every two or three weeks for a grade, they have an opportunity to work on editing skills before turning in a finished copy. They also have control over their own writing and learning.

The proliferation of Young Authors' Conferences, writing contests, and even new workbooks and new textbook programs attests to the growing emphasis on writing in schools in Alabama and elsewhere. The inclusion of workshops on writing at local and national reading conferences is also proof of the trend towards more holistic teaching that is bound to reverse the poor outcomes in the past of student progress in learning how to write.

Last year 13 teachers from our school attended the Gulf Coast Conference on the Teaching of Writing. They prepared a professional quality tape showing what they were doing in their classes to promote the love of writing. These 13 teachers now form a close-knit group of teachers who nurture each other as well as their students. They have an increased professional pride in what they are doing to advance student competency in writing. Not a week passes that students from the local universities do not come to observe in these classes.

And there are further signs leading me to believe that a love of and a competency in writing have now taken root at our school among both teachers and students. Among teachers, I see that professional leave requests to attend writing conferences and workshops have increased. I see that both old and new teachers are asking the pioneer teachers to demonstrate the process approach. I also see that some teachers have become writers themselves. Three teachers have had articles accepted for publication in local and national professional journals this year. In addition, teachers are reporting more and more that their students are asking to write just for fun. There is also evidence that our students' self-confidence as writers has increased significantly. In October when we announced we were accepting essays, fictional stories, and poems for submission to a national publication, we received 60 entries compared to the usual 15.

I don't think we could stop now even if we wanted to. As students move up to the next higher grade, their parents are insisting they be placed in classes where writing is stressed.

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To You, Boy Painter Listening at the Door

Rita Sparks
Birmingham, Alabama

To watch you remove your white painter's cap,
wipe your sweating brow, and take a seat
by the open door.
You cock a curious, eager ear
in the direction of the classroom.
Inside, the teacher is leading the students
toward a definition of poetry.
"Musical," "lyrical," "intense," "moving."
I see you strain to catch our words
that are words and not much more.
Perhaps you have a word of your own to add.
You look as if you know something we could,
but--at the moment--don't.
Finally, the class turns to the old reliables,
the poets themselves, who really ought to know.
One would think they would know.
"Poetry is a momentary stay against confusion."
"Poetry is an answering back."
"Poetry is saying one thing, meaning another."
Poetry is this and poetry is that.
Twice you smile to yourself.
As you walk away, I smile also.
You are the word made flesh.
Poetry is a boy painter listening at the door.

Writing and the First Year Teacher

Misti Whitson McAdams

Misti Whitson McAdams is a second-grade teacher at Hewitt Elementary School in Jefferson County. A first-year teacher, she graduated from University of Alabama at Birmingham, where she was chosen Outstanding Undergraduate from the Department of Curriculum and Instruction.

I walked into the empty room for the first time and flipped on the lights. As the light drove all the darkness from the room, a thought passed through my mind. *For the next nine months this is my home, and these students are my children. When these children grow up and leave, what is it that I want them to carry with them?* After a few moments of standing, staring at the empty room and thinking, I finally found the answer. When these children leave me next summer, I want them to be well-rounded individuals ready to face the problems of tomorrow with their own solutions formed from their own creative minds.

Like most recent college graduates, I left my alma mater with a head full of concepts and principles ready to put them into practice. I bristled with enthusiasm, yearning to take on the world. My primary desire was to teach kids to write naturally. While discussing my ideas concerning writing with a veteran teacher, I was brought down to earth when she said, "I remember being so idealistic. Writing is not really feasible at the elementary level. You have to teach skills first; writing comes later. You can't forget your skills; that's what the tests are on. Boy, do you have a lot to learn!" On one point she was right. Being a first-year teacher, I do have a lot to learn. But I have already learned one truth that is very valuable. Writing is feasible at the elementary level, and by writing, children learn the mechanical skills required for written correctness naturally. Writing teaches skills in context so that they are related to some meaningful whole. It provides children opportunities to think logically and to see their thoughts in concrete form. In a sense, teachers can have their cake and eat it too. They can teach basic language skills and writing at the same time.

Until I was out in the "real world of teaching," I did not realize the controversy which exists over these two approaches, skills versus writing. In the skills approach, classes are drilled on specific language skills such as the correct use of punctuation. These skills are memorized and reinforced with rote exercises. In contrast, the writing, or process, approach teaches these skills in the context of the composition. As children create stories of their own, they must use the rules of the language in order to make sense of their writing for themselves and for others.

Teachers focusing on skills apart from writing can be compared to football coaches preparing their players for a game. Suppose coaches drilled all of their players on isolated skills without "padding up" and really practicing the game itself. When game time arrives, what types of teams do these coaches have? They have groups of individuals who know how to perform all of the skills perfectly. The players can quote all of the rules and demonstrate all of the skills, but they cannot put these into practice in the game itself. Coaches who teach the process of playing are exactly the opposite. Their players practice by playing the game. They also review the rules of the game as a whole. Only after learning the whole concept are the players drilled in isolated skills. On game day, these players use the skills in the context of the game to walk away with the victory.

Teaching writing is similar to coaching football. The teacher who stresses skills in isolation will teach children to punctuate and spell without teaching them how to write. Lucy Calkins describes a group of children who had been taught "the rules of the game first":

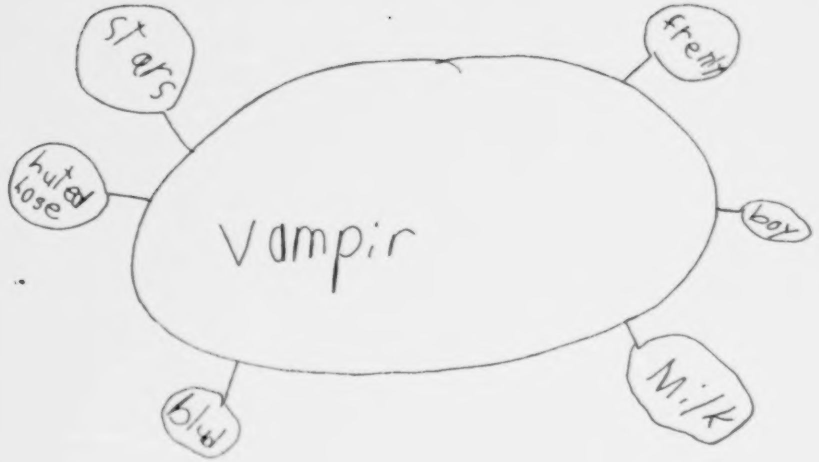
> They described punctuation by trying to remember the rules they had been taught. This group knew that periods come at the end of a sentence, but when I asked them how they knew to end a sentence, they didn't know. "You can tell when a sentence ends by the period," was all they could say. One boy had mastered the tricks of the trade. He suggested that you look and see if a capital letter comes next, and if so, insert the period. That boy will do well on the third grade achievement tests, and many of his classmates will as well. But drills on missing punctuation have little carryover into writing.
>
> Jack, another student in the mechanics classroom, knew that commas were for lists of people--Joe, Frank, Peter. "Anywhere else?" I asked. "Sometimes when you paint," Jack said. "Different colors--purple, green, blue." Then he added, "But nowhere else."
>
> Many of the mechanics students defined commas by referring to one specific use only. "Put them between fruit." "Commas separate states." (203)

The skills must be taught not only in isolation but in context as well. The mastery of skills comes in putting them to use in the writing. At that point, children develop an understanding of the skills being taught.

My second-grade class is working together to become the victorious team which uses skills in context. Each day we have an allotted amount of time in which we write. Customarily, the class together chooses a topic on which to write. The topic may be seasonal or an idea from a unit we have studied. Just because we choose a topic does not mean that every child is bound to that subject. The topic is always optional. After we have chosen a subject, we spend about two or three minutes in silence. This is thinking time. The children brainstorm ideas that relate to their topics. After the silent time, together we create a cluster on the board.

I first learned about clustering during the 1988 ACTE Fall Conference in a special session conducted by Gabriele Rico, author of *Writing the Natural Way*. At the time, I did not realize the terrific power this tool of clustering holds. When I returned to my classroom and put this concept into practice for the first time, I was utterly amazed at the results. Using this method, seven-year-old boys and girls are able to gather their thoughts and write coherent stories. When using clustering, they brainstorm an idea, writing in phrases or single words in a cluster around the subject.

The children enjoy clustering. It gives them a break from the routine textbook pencil and paper exercises. They have the opportunity to think individually and plan a strategy. My children's enthusiasm about clustering reminds me



This cluster on vampires was written by Ben, a second grader, who is normally a low achiever.

over and over how we as teachers limit children in their thinking. Rarely do we give them the opportunity to develop skills in thinking their own thoughts. Normally we tell them what to think. It never ceases to amaze me what wonderful, exciting, and in-depth creations these young minds produce.

Ben used his cluster to create a very suspenseful story with a surprising conclusion. His story dealt with two boys who entered a haunted house. The boys climbed up some creaking, moaning stairs; and they saw what they believed to be a vampire. He was drinking something out of a bottle that the two boys thought was blood; but when they drew closer, they found out the vampire was just another boy like themselves, drinking milk. The three boys began to talk, and they found out that the third boy was really a friendly vampire who did not like blood. All he wanted was some playmates.

After they write down their stories, the children test the effectiveness of their new creations on their classmates in peer conferences. We have four conferencing stations in our room. These stations are designated areas of the room assigned beforehand. Two students are allowed at each station, with students rotating until each has had a turn at peer conferencing. So far, I have allowed the children to choose their own conferencing partner. I have found that most students want a partner who will listen attentively to their writing and give helpful feedback. The students seem to choose different partners until they find that perfect match, and then they want to stick together.

After they have chosen a partner, they share their pieces with each other. The students are very good at giving each other positive feedback. We have discussed many times the importance of giving feedback in the appropriate manner. Children always begin their conferences with a positive note, for example, "I really liked the way you described that meal; I could almost taste it."

They continue the peer conferencing by asking questions: "I really don't understand what you meant by *big*. Was it as *big* as a building or the size of a *big* dog?" Questioning seems to come to the children very easily. It appears to be the natural process of a young mind. After responding and questioning, the students return to writing. At this point in the process, they may choose to accept or reject the conference suggestions. Even if students choose not to accept the suggestions, in most cases these ideas stimulate them, and they revise the work.

Throughout the entire process, I walk around the room conducting mini conferences. I ask the students thought-provoking questions, helping them out of dry spots. The conference with me comes after the first revision stage. I am stunned at the students' desire for perfection. During this conference we work on mechanical correctness. Up to this point, the primary concern is getting those creative thoughts down on paper. Instead of spending long periods of time drilling the skills leading to mechanical correctness, the teacher can explain them quickly in conferencing. Donald Graves supports this method of teaching skills:

> Skills are taught in conference because they last longest when they are taught within the context of the child's own paper. Fewer skills are called to the child's attention this way, but those that are become part of the child's practicing repertoire. (147)

I will again refer to my student Ben for an example. In the conference he asked me to read his work aloud to him so he could hear how it sounded. I read it to him just as he had written it, stopping at every period. Suddenly, he interrupted me, "No, you read it wrong." I explained to him that I had read it exactly as he had written it. "But I don't want to stop that long after *vampire*. I want you to slow down but don't stop that long." I then discussed with him the use of a comma. I have no doubt that Ben will remember to use a comma next time he wants to slow down instead of stop. This is one of those precious teaching moments that should be grasped and used. Only in conferencing could this happen.

Once again I think of those words of the veteran teacher. I really do have a lot to learn, but already I have learned one thing of utmost importance: writing is a key; and it can open the door to any mind, no matter the age. I have learned about the importance of writing as a first-year teacher, and I will carry this precious knowledge with me into my veteran years.

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Toward A Coherent Pedagogy of Writing Instruction: A Modest Proposal

Robbie Jean Walker

Robbie Jean Walker, Associate Professor English at Auburn University at Montgomery, taught English in high school for 13 years. She joined the AUM faculty in 1979 and has taught composition courses, black literature, and rhetoric and style. She is a member of the Composition Committee and directs the AUM Learning Center. Her publications include articles on writing and black literature. She has participated on ACTE and CCC programs, and for the past two summers was a core faculty member for the Tennessee Governor's Academy for Teachers of Writing, headed by Richard Marius, Director of Expository Writing at Harvard University.

A responsibility devolves upon those who teach writing to impose some order on the chaos of several competing ideologies. All good things do not necessarily work well together--at least not in the teaching of writing. This reality often has little to do with the inherent quality of the individual components, all of which may be pedagogically respectable. But the principle of constraint is applicable here. Once we accept certain assumptions and practices, we necessarily restrict our future course. Adjustments or additions to our pedagogy require evaluation to determine their compatibility with assumptions and practices previously adopted. We have an unbecoming penchant for indiscriminately extracting isolated bits and pieces from theory and methodology, often failing to understand why our programs are not working or why improvement in student writing remains elusive. We become "recipe swappers," to borrow Ann Berthoff's apt characterization, and our students are confused by the discrepancies between what we say and what we do.

The proposal submitted here is indeed a modest one, requiring only that honesty and common sense inform what we do in the name of writing as we work toward a coherent discipline. And coherence, not uniformity, is the ideal. Coherence implies basing our instruction on guiding principles that are consistent with our perception of the purposes and scope of the art and reconciling those principles with classroom practice. A coherent pedagogy will require sensible and carefully considered choices from among several prominent ideological stances. The compromises implied here do not require borrowing from every node on the ideological continuum or some kind of idealized eclecticism so that we can claim intellectual broadmindedness. Rather, professionals should be free to organize their instruction around pedagogical principles as broad as commitment dictates, so long as the practices in a given classroom evolve from guiding principles consistent with each other.

Our discipline carries its own semantic signals that do not necessarily mean the same thing to all people. The ambiguity itself is not catastrophic. What is imperative is that the components of the discipline to which individual instructors subscribe demonstrate internal consistency. We need to acknowledge some inherent incongruities among the current emphasis on "process" and "ownership" (writers' authority over their own texts) and ultimate accountability in written discourse. Our classroom methodology and evaluation practices should not contradict what we claim to believe about process and ownership, possibly two of the most idealistic and appealing semantic signals of the discipline.

Teachers of writing should applaud the emphasis on the writing process as one of the most humane philosophical shifts of our era. Richard C. Gebhardt's characterization of the interest in process seems accurate. He describes writing teachers wandering down the halls at conferences and poring over professional journals to learn more about the writing process. But he laments a common result of such searches.

> Often. . .teachers who take these walks in search of clarification and unity--underlying principles on which to build teaching--find, instead, contradictions and confusion. For statements presented as theories of the composing process. . .often turn out to be theories of only a part of the process, or theories of how the process works in some writers, some of the time. (620)

The fragmentation to which Gebhardt alludes is not the main culprit. Teachers know already that what goes on in most writing classrooms--indeed what goes on in their own classrooms--is often in basic conflict with the empowering and liberating implications of process in its purest form.

In its purest and most ideal form, process implies a respect for the divergent ways in which people construct reality, or make meaning--a recognition of diverse learning styles and personality types. Carried to its ultimate possibilities, process would include the comprehensive features of the eloquent definition provided by Dan Kirby et al. We should note here that Kirby et al. preface their definition of the "emperor's new wardrobe" with a disclaimer, asserting that the term "'writing processes' (itself) is an imperfect description of what happens when writers attempt to form meanings through written language" (719). The concept of writing process is substantially more inclusive than most people perceive it to be.

> Processes are the stories of the production of individual texts and of the birth of ideas. Processes are everything writers do to construct texts--whether that be daydreaming, drawing, stalling, talking, copying, or re-arranging papers in a notebook. Processes are the visible and invisible things that writers do to wrestle ideas onto the page. As such, processes do not have moral equivalents. There are no good or bad processes; there are simply processes that work in the production of a text the writer wants, or processes that fail and ultimately frustrate the writer. (720)

If we accept this analysis, we need also to recognize our responsibility to consider the constraints of our teaching environments before we proclaim too loudly what we believe about process. Perhaps our idealism will permit us to embrace the comprehensive notion of process while our honesty will force us to admit that complete implementation is often impractical and sometimes impossible.

Process also assumes ownership over the writing and some power of decision about when and where we write, the power to put writing aside when a particular writing task is out of sync with our emotional and mental readiness. Honesty may require our admitting to our students that the restraints of formal education sometimes militate against the complete implementation of all that process implies. We need to communicate to them that they will sometimes have to write through writer's block--especially on occasions of important in-class writings such as final examinations--although the concept of process would permit more latitude. Toni Morrison, 1988 Pulitzer Prize winner for fiction, recommends respect for writer's block.

> You shouldn't write through it. It's blocked because it ought to be blocked, because you haven't got it right now. All the frustration. . .that comes from "Oh, my God, I cannot write now" should be displaced. It's just a message to you saying, "That's right, you can't write now, so don't." (qtd. in Tate 120)

Many other successful writers would concur with Morrison. But what does this respect for writer's block mean for students with a designated time, day, and hour to submit a finished document? Until and if we are able to make institutional changes to accommodate what we know and accept philosophically about the writing process, perhaps we have to settle for honestly explaining to our students that the inspiring lectures most of us like to give about process are just that--inspiring lectures--from which they should take all that they find meaningful within the limitations of the system in which they must operate.

There are ways in which we can demonstrate to our students our respect for process. We can act on what research tells us about the implications of diverse learning styles and different personality types on process writing. For example, acknowledging that a given textbook or classroom procedure is not compatible with a particular writer's method of making meaning communicates to students our respect for individual writing personalities. A study conducted by George H. Jensen and John K. DiTiberio is instructive. The results of the study reveal distinct procedural differences in the ways people of different personality types approach writing tasks. Whether or not a given teacher of writing considers formal testing for personality types within his or her purview, endorsement of the theme of the findings, "accepting . . .legitimate differences in how students write (299)," should be helpful to students and indicative of the instructor's commitment to the process emphasis.

Several important theories of the composing process deserve our attention because they can assist us in formulating a coherent set of guiding principles to inform our instruction. Lester Faigley acknowledges the contributions made by the expressive and the cognitive views of the composing process but recommends our moving beyond these views to a social view.

> . . .a social view of writing moves beyond the expressivist contention that the individual discovers the self through language and beyond the cognitivist position that an individual constructs reality through language. In a social view, any effort to write about the self or reality always comes in relation to previous texts. (536)

All three views encompass important considerations about the various contexts for writing and confirm the complexity of the writing process. The operative terms from the three views are discovering self through language in the expressive view, constructing reality through language in the cognitive view, and relating the text in preparation to previous texts in the social view. The three views seem to represent a complementary--rather than an adversarial--

relationship. Such information should prevent our making process itself a dogma. Divergent writers in our classrooms may find the theory of the writing process to which we subscribe either too restrictive or too permissive. As Jensen and DiTiberio report, introverted personality types need and require more structure and may actually be confused by brainstorming and other loosely structured approaches to making meaning (289-91).

Jeff Rackham's characterization of writing as a "private act" but a "public performance" is helpful, sensible, and honest (4). This dual character of writing is a productive point of departure in instructing students and much less pathological than attempting to claim some adversarial relationship between process and product. Students need to know from the beginning that no matter how many journal entries they compose free from the threat of evaluation, the kind of writing we are preparing them to do will indeed have an audience. They need to understand that audiences have certain expectations about what competent, effective writing is and that process--though undeniably important--exists in relationship to ultimate accountability. This kind of honesty will enable us to retain our credibility and make us seem less like traitors when we apply red pen to those writings created "freely," writings we initially insisted they could pursue without conscious concern for grammar, structure, and form.

What we gain in spontaneity and receptivity by withholding the expectation of ultimate form may well be negated if students feel betrayed when we suddenly demand that what they have to say should make sense and be organized to the extent that a reader can follow their trend of thought. Students should enjoy the freedom that "undisciplined" writing affords, but they should know early on that this freedom is temporary and that all successful writers ultimately reach the point of accountability. Phasing in this expectation seems to make less sense to students than it makes to us. Shifting from freer models to final products does not seem to be quite so automatic as theorists initially believed. Several process models are exciting and can work well in the classroom, but linear presentations of any of the models can be as restrictive as traditional methodology.

A sensible and honest course of action would require us to acknowledge that the writing process, whatever that entails for a given writer, usually leads to a product that will probably be evaluated for its effectiveness. We cannot deride product at any phase of the writing cycle when the product will be the evidence we use to assess how meaningfully students have engaged themselves in the process. For the coherence that this proposal advocates, the implications are clear: teachers of writing should not claim more respect for the writing process--with all its logical derivatives--than they demonstrate in classroom practice and evaluation.

Ownership, possibly more appealing philosophically to many of us than even process, is potentially more problematic. Dan Kirby et al. recommend letting the writing "belong to the children" (720). This discussion is directed specifically to elementary teachers, but the enunciation of the features of ownership receives at least intellectual assent from writing teachers at all levels. Kirby et al. advocate that students be given complete authority over their texts.

> They [Students] need to make all the important decisions about their writing. Questions of what to write about, of whether or not to share a piece of writing or simply file it in a folder are best answered by students themselves. . . . Students who know that they own their own writing act like authors and think of themselves as writers. (720)

These impressions of ownership no doubt receive philosophical endorsement from many writing teachers who often imply such ownership. As with process, though, changing the rules of ownership after expectations have been established spawns distrust and discouragement among students.

Les Perelman would recommend that we avoid making such extravagant claims about ownership in the first place.

> . . .in most of the writing situations our students will encounter they will be allowed to pick neither the subject nor the apparent truth to be argued. Lawyers are required to argue the case given to them. Similarly, salespersons do not decide whether they should advise a customer to buy or not to buy a product. A manager writing a memo may be able to select a specific stance toward a subject, but the subject itself is often predetermined. (476)

Somewhere between the extremes of no authority and all authority will be tenable positions we can defend with integrity and honesty. The guiding principles must always be consistency and compatibility among all parts of our own classroom agenda.

Process and ownership are rich in connotative potential. The scope of each concept encompasses numerous philosophical perspectives in relation to the degree of freedom and responsibility accorded student writers. The time may come when the discipline can claim a canon that will reconcile some of the contradictions. Until such time, each teacher of writing is professionally obligated to present to each writing class a coherent course, consistent in all its phases. And however appealing and provocative certain practices or emphases may be, the extent to which we embrace them should be determined by all the considerations contained in our own pedagogy. We need to ensure that how we deal with the final examination comports well with what we tell our students in the beginning about process and ownership. As we grapple with and seek to synthesize the tremendous body of scholarship at our disposal, we need to maintain a coherent interim pedagogy characterized by common sense and honesty.

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Easter Sunday at Sepulga

Sara J. McAnulty
Andalusia High School, Andalusia, Alabama

Let loose at last
from the sermon that had droned on and on--
"O, death, where is thy sting?"--
I ran in the cemetery,
reveling in the invincibility of youth,
jumping deftly over the mounds.
Half-hearing their admonitions--
"You children, behave now and
don't step on the graves, you hear?"
Waiting for my chance,
catching them busy with dinner on the grounds.
Feet planted apart,
rocking the sun-warmed, sunken, slanted slab,
I chanted the heavy meter of the hymn,
"Up from the grave he *arose*,
with a mighty triumph o'er his *foes*."

Then,
damp from the dark wetness of his hole,
he flicked his forked tongue,
testing, tasting,
hungry for life
after the fast of dormancy.
Ignoring the terror that I couldn't even speak,
He lapped around my leg,
Then slithered off into the shade
of the waiting dark woods.

Going a Long Way: Active Learning in the Writing Class

Warren W. Werner

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Students enter a writing class ready to sit and listen and perhaps even take notes about what is said. They are often eager to absorb new material. Unfortunately, the students' approach to and attitude toward learning how to write are the same as in other classes and for other subjects, but writing as a subject differs greatly from science or history or French or even literature. Writing is a skill that needs development and nurture; it cannot be poured into students as if they were passive receptacles, vessels to be filled with knowledge. The challenge for writing teachers is to involve students in the learning process and the writing process, both of which encompass more than just performing the writing assignments. To engage and help students experience different aspects of the writing process and new strategies for presenting material, I have developed certain classroom activities. By asking students to read each others' work, write about what they read, and revise their own work, I introduce them to the complexity of the writing process and the variety of options available to them when writing.

The Passive Student

Most classroom learning in composition can be described as follows: students read the textbook (often a rhetoric and a reader) and listen to the teacher, absorbing what information they can, and then they produce on the teacher's demand a particular kind of text on their own. My own writing classes fall largely into this passive routine. Passive education is efficient for the teacher--material can be covered quickly and fully. Passive education also results from structural necessity. In my case, I have students for only a 10-week quarter, what often feels like a blink of an eye. Worse yet, I teach at a large state university; students expect passive education in my class because they receive it in other classes.

However, passive education is inefficient for learning. Most striking about the process is its seeming randomness. Material sinks into certain students but not others, or only partially. Students themselves fail to realize what they miss or that they have missed something; their writing efforts at times seem like games of solitaire played with decks of 43 cards. And it is easy for these students to miss something because they are never fully engaged in the writing process. To write a text once, to get it done and out, seems sufficient for them. They remain largely unconscious of the fact that writing consists of a series of choices that must be made over and over again, that nothing in a piece of writing is ever settled until the piece is abandoned, that there is rarely one way to present a message in language. Many students put words down on the page and assume that they are finished. Revision for these students consists of looking up misspelled words in a dictionary, fiddling with word choice (the thesaurus syndrome), correcting any grammar errors they may spot, and copying the piece over in neat handwriting--perhaps skipping every other line--or typing it up. This procedure is rhetorically inflexible, as if the students were following a recipe for baked Alaska instead of composing language. They shut down the writing process before it has begun, thus limiting their options, closing their texts, and halting the discovery of new meaning.

The inflexibility in students' writing behavior can be seen in how they handle writing assignments. One assignment I sometimes use acts as a trap for these students, although it was not designed as such. In my business and technical writing classes, I routinely assign a progress report, the purpose of which is for the students to evaluate the work they have done so far and the work they have remaining to be done on their major project for the quarter, usually a research report. When explaining the assignment, I pass out copies of a student-written progress report, but unlike other examples I bring to class, this one is not well-written. It is vague and imprecise, pompous in its diction and attitude toward the reader, and outright misleading about the progress made. I had thought that this would be a good example of what not to do and would lead to a discussion of how the report could be made more effective. What I find amazing, though, is that when the students write their own progress reports, they copy both the good and the bad features in their own reports, regardless of our class discussion. The problem is that they mistake the example for a model, and as a model it lures the students into inappropriate and ineffective rhetorical strategies.

The mistake the students make here is crucial. Models are guides, providing us with general outlines to govern our behaviors, but they do not dictate the particulars of our actions. Models are widespread and useful in a range of applications. In fact, we all walk around with models in our heads for all sorts of behaviors. In writing, models are at the base of the concept of genres. Whether we are composing a sonnet, a journal article, or a grocery list, we work with an idea in mind of what the final product will look like and consist of. We struggle then either to fulfill the requirements of the model's conventions or to violate those conventions willfully. Any text, any example, is just one particular manifestation of a model. Perhaps my students' trouble is my fault: in an environment of passive education, I should probably bring to class only good texts students can use as patterns. But that does not seem to me to be a productive writing behavior. My passive students, locked in their passive mode of education, are enslaved by the example they mistake for a model because their knowledge and experience of writing repertoires are limited, thus reproducing particular features from the example because they cannot generalize enough to discern the model. Students produce texts that conform to their expectations of what texts are. They write like galloping horses wearing blinders, rushing to reach the end of the race. Unfortunately, writing is more like a fox hunt than the Kentucky Derby. It twists and turns; it doubles back and winds forward. The writing process is characterized by a thicket of surprise and unexpectedness. Although I have never been an aficionado of blood sports, the metaphor is apt: students need to climb down from their high horses and run with the hounds, following their noses through the rhetorical forest and muddying their feet in a mire of prose. Students must learn to overcome their rhetorical limitations; however difficult they perceive writing, we must show them how much harder it actually is.

This problem is not confined to business and technical writing students who must compose progress reports. Rather, rhetorical limitation is the condition of most students, with the educational structure of passivity severely constraining options and growth. Since students are in school to learn, we cannot fault them for not knowing already what they have come to learn. At all levels, students' strategies for developing written discourse are necessarily limited. Freshman essays are bleak because students hold a truncated, deformed idea of what an essay is and a distorted image of what their readers want. The solution, of course, is that students need to read more, and read well, in order to experience and internalize new strategies and techniques. However, a careful reader is not always a good writer. Writing is a difficult skill that requires long practice to develop. Reading and writing can be learned only concurrently, with both activities feeding and leading the other on.

This sketch of one problem with the teaching of writing has been suggestive rather than exhaustive because my intention in this article is to present a practical idea for use in the classroom in order to help students develop rhetorical fluency and to help break down the authority students invest in the examples we give them of particular types of writing. In particular, I try to break the students away from their passive behavior, revise the situation, and make the learning active. I intend to make the students *learn by doing*. My examples here come from business and technical writing classes, but the techniques apply to writing of all kinds and on all levels. Despite the superficial differences between business and technical writing and other forms of writing--that my students write letters and memos and reports instead of essays and poems and stories, that my students think about business and engineering instead of literature--writing instruction on all levels is engaged in essentially the same task. Our common goal is to educate students to be able to respond to the world intelligibly and to contribute effectively to the human conversation.

Learning By Doing

To help students become active learners within the classroom's limitations, I have students read each others' work, write about what they read, and revise their own work. I engage the students in the writing process and introduce them to new rhetorical strategies for developing a particular document in ways potentially possible for them to achieve through seeing how their classmates have handled the same situation. I want to increase the students' flexibility and develop their range of options when faced with a particular context.

I will detail here what we do with the quarter's first assignment in my technical writing classes to give an idea of the procedure. When the assignment--an extended definition of a technical term in the students' fields in memo-format--is due, I give the students time to proofread their work, even though they are more than ready to hand it in as is. To help them, I explain how to proofread. Although they typed the assignment and I have previously stressed appearance and such, I tell them to make corrections right on the page. When the students look finished, I have them exchange their memos with each other: they are to read the other person's work and then write a memo to me evaluating it. Specifically, they comment on whether the purpose is stated clearly, whether the opening sentence definition is precise, whether the strategies used for expanding the definition are appropriate for the intended reader, and whether problems of any kind mar the text. The purpose here is not to edit the memo or to help the original writers but to develop the students' own critical abilities.

The students groan at first; they had thought they were finished with the assignment. One thing for the students to learn is that no matter how many times they may think they are done with a piece of writing, it is rare that they will ever finish it. The completion of any document is more a result of a deadline than anything else. To use an example familiar to my students, computer manuals are often bound in spiral notebooks to ease revision.

The second response comes when someone realizes, from seeing another's work, that he has forgotten to initial his memo. A flutter of re-exchanged papers occurs as others notice the same lapse. Usually, someone asks what is important about initialing, and I explain. My sense is that explanation does little good; I have given it once already. Instead, what matters is the action and seeing what others have done. I believe that from this point of the quarter on any failure to initial is genuine carelessness, while this first time resulted from ignorance.

Initialing their memos is a small point, but it indicates the larger process. In writing their in-class evaluative memos, some students see work better than their own, and others see work not as effective. The point is that they see work different from their own. Students are meant to realize that they have a broader range of choices for proceeding than they had individually suspected beforehand, that various ways to go depend on the context and the intended reader.

What is remarkable about this assignment is that many of the students make quite perceptive comments, pointing out not just errors but also problems in style, tone, or content. Some students can adeptly point to what is good in a document. Others routinely label features good or bad. The weakest students demonstrate a genuine inability to distinguish between good and bad writing, often castigating the original writers for committing serious flaws--flaws which escape my own notice. Their in-class memos indicate more about the students' own writing problems (or the problems they have previously been accused of) than those of the documents they are criticizing.

After I grade the definitions, students may revise their work if the grade falls below a certain cutoff point. (Ideally, everyone should revise all of the writing assignments, but because of the numbers involved I restrict revisions to students who need more help with the writing or who experience difficulty with particular assignments.) When a student sits down to revise, she has more than my written comments to work from. Having read what others have done with their definitions, she can adapt or adopt new strategies for her own. As we repeat this process with several assignments during the quarter, the student begins to understand that there is no one way to write each assignment, that no single example can guide her. One definition to one reader requires explanations that another does not, and each definition in the class will differ from the rest. Additionally, the open-ended nature of the writing process encourages the student to go back, try something different, test one approach against another for a particular reader. By giving students the opportunity to revise, I allow them to fail--and try again without penalty.

This active writing works with various assignments. For example, I ask the students to evaluate instructions in terms of whether or not the intended reader can use them. With proposals for their research reports, they look to see if each is fully justified. With the letter of application for a job and the resume, I use two different approaches. One, students write me a memo recommending whether their classmate should be granted an interview based solely on the letter and resume. Two, they exchange their letters and resumes until they have read six or seven others. Then they write me a memo explaining how they could have improved their own. This quarter, because of an unusually high attrition rate in my business writing classes, when the students bring their proposals to class, I am going to have everyone read everyone else's proposal. Then as a group we will talk about what works and what does not and what could be done differently. If I am lucky, a few students will ask to revise their proposals before I have a chance to grade them. If I can accomplish this feat, I will have gone a long way toward helping these students become writers.

Active Writing

One purpose of these exercises is to lead students to make discoveries on their own about the nature of writing and of the writing process. We must help them learn to grapple with texts, contexts, readers, and different ways of approaching the same writing challenges. By breaking down students' over-reliance on examples, we can help them build for themselves sophisticated models that can be used on a variety of occasions. This method of teaching writing, of leading students to make their own discoveries and choices, brings us closer to the original meaning of the word *pedagogy*, a word whose history contains a necessary parable for us all. In ancient Greece, a pedagogue was a slave who walked the young scholar to and from school every day. The pedagogue did not teach the child, in the formal sense, but instead the pedagogue was important in helping review the child's lesson and in aiding his adaption to society. The pedagogue was part tutor, part guide, part protector.

By having students read each other's work, write about that work, and revise their own writing, I intend to lead them on to seeing and internalizing for themselves different procedures and strategies for developing their own material. By requiring the students both to read and to write, I hope to include the reader in the writing process--since the goal of any text is to be read. In this manner, I try to walk a long way with my students.

My purpose in this article is simple: to describe ways to break through the passive behavior of student writers and involve them actively in the writing process so that they can learn by doing. On the one hand, I have presented classroom activities adaptable to different situations, and I encourage variations. On the other hand, I have tried to sketch the theoretical background to these activities. Although it is important for teachers to find what works for them in the classroom, it is also important that we articulate both a theory of instruction and theory of writing. Active writing requires students to examine their rhetorical choices and to revise their work while increasing their repertoires of rhetorical strategies instead of passively imitating examples inappropriate for unique situations.

Students perceive writing as a difficult and mysterious activity. They struggle hard to write the papers they bring to class, and they possess little idea of whether what they have written is right or wrong. But students err in two respects. First, just because they have words down on a page, they think that the text is finished. Unfortunately, this is the point where the hard work begins, the messy task of critically analyzing what has been written and its methods and strategies. Second, they do not realize that a piece of writing is rarely right or wrong. Right and wrong are inappropriate terms for evaluating writing. Instead, a text should be judged by its effectiveness. We can go a long way toward overcoming these perceptions if we teach our students to view the writing process with more flexibility and to develop a greater range of options when confronting any writing task. In the end, perhaps, we can make writing even more difficult for students but also less mysterious and more effective as they take active roles in humanity's conversation.

Suggested Readings

Below is a partial list of other works on the issues touched on in this article. Readers interested in the practical activities described in the article are encouraged to read further in these sources.

On education in ancient Greece and Rome:

Marrou, H.I. *A History of Education in Antiquity*. Trans. George Lamb. 1956. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1982.

On models:

Brooke, Robert. "Modeling a Writer's Identity: Reading and Imitation in the Writing Classroom." *College Composition and Communication* 39 (1988): 23-41.

Kent, Thomas. "Genre Theory in the Area of Business Writing." *The Technical Writing Teacher* 14 (1987): 232-42.

Laing, Gordon J. *Building Scientific Models*. Aldershot, England: Gower, 1986.

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Winkler, Victoria M. "The Role of Models in Technical and Scientific Writing." *New Essays in Technical and Scientific Communication: Research, Theory, Practice*. Ed. Paul V. Anderson, R. John Brockmann, and Carolyn R. Miller. Baywood's Technical Communications Series: Volume 2. Farmingdale, NY: Baywood, 1983. 111-22.

On discourse communities:

Bruffee, Kenneth A. "Collaborative Learning and the 'Conversation of Mankind.'" *College English* 46 (1984): 635-52.

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Doheny-Farina, Stephen. "Writing in an Emerging Organization: An Ethnographic Study." *Written Communication* 3 (1986): 158-85.

Freed, Richard C., and Glenn J. Broadhead. "Discourse Communities, Sacred Texts, and Institutional Norms." *College Composition and Communication* 38 (1987): 154-65.

Herrington, Anne J. "Classrooms as Forums for Reasoning and Writing." *College Composition and Communication* 36 (1985): 404-13.

Hillocks, George, Jr. "What Works in Teaching Composition: A Meta-analysis of Experimental Treatment Studies." *American Journal of Education* 93 (1984): 133-70.

Nystrand, Martin. "Rhetoric's 'Audience' and Linguistics' 'Speech Community': Implications for Understanding Writing, Reading, and Text." *What Writers Know: The Language, Process, and Structure of Written Discourse*. Ed. Martin Nystrand. New York: Academic P, 1982. 1-28.

Two good collections of essays:

Graves, Richard L., ed. *Rhetoric and Composition: A Sourcebook for Teachers and Writers*. 2nd ed. Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook, 1984.

Tate, Gary, and Edward P.J. Corbett, eds. *The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook*. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford U P, 1988.

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Navigating English Waters: The Value of the Learning Log

Peggy Swoger

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How much of our lives do we spend just finding our way around? On a recent summer visit to Sweden, an American colleague and I ended up taking the last bus home from a party given by our Swedish hosts. Neither of us spoke Swedish, and although many Swedes speak English, our driver did not. He recognized neither the street nor the neighborhood names we slurred out in our Alabama accents, but he refused to abandon us at midnight when he reached his last stop. Instead, he drove us searching for our street, careening dangerously around unfamiliar corners. My friend and I decided we had rather trust our lives to the darkness, and when we saw a familiar landmark, we abandoned ship.

Navigating alone in a strange land can be scary and downright dangerous. When I remember that feeling of being utterly lost and seeking meaning from every tree or turn in the road, I have a lot of sympathy for all those blank faces in my classroom that stare down into E. E. Cummings and come up with nothing. Rescuing them seems so much easier than helping them find their own way around.

The question that plagued my teaching was this: how could I develop readers and writers who would take the ultimate risk of thinking for themselves? When my students encounter lines from E. E. Cummings, such as "a man plays with the bigness of his littleness" ("pity this busy monster, manunkind"), they must feel about me, the teacher, the way I felt about that Swedish bus driver speeding through the night, destination unknown.

Feeling dissatisfied with my teaching was the first step toward discovery. Because I wanted the students to learn to use their minds well, the "writing to learn" movement caught my attention several years ago. Although I had been reading about and trying out new techniques, the learning log idea did not take shape until I encountered the teaching practices of Dixie Dellinger of Cherryville, North Carolina. She explained that her senior high students wrote "into, through, and out of" the lesson ("Thinking/Writing"). In other words, Dellinger's students wrote before the reading, during the reading, and after the reading in a notebook they called "the log." The learning log was a thinking place where the reader constructed her own meaning.

When I set up the log with my advanced ninth-grade English students, I asked them to respond personally to the poems and stories assigned for reading. They wrote single paragraph entries or used a double-entry format. The double-entry format, from the writings of Ann E. Berthoff (see *The Making of Meaning* 41), enables the student to connect prior knowledge with the new material, as shown in the student example on the next page.

In the learning log, students conduct dialogues with themselves, making meaning by connecting their previous experiences and understandings with the new material, by arguing and posing questions. Ann Berthoff refers to this engagement of "active mind" as a "continual audit of meaning" (42).

Summary writing in the logs was not rewarded. The check-plus went to those logs that were true dialogues with oneself about the literature. One student marched up to my desk after a disappointing series of checks on his log and demanded a check-plus. "This is the best thing I have ever written," he argued. But, he had not yet broken away from the text into his own world of thoughts where real knowledge is constructed. He was still reporting, not thinking. Later he wrote that when he first began the log, he did not even know what an insight was, but now he was having insights all over the place.

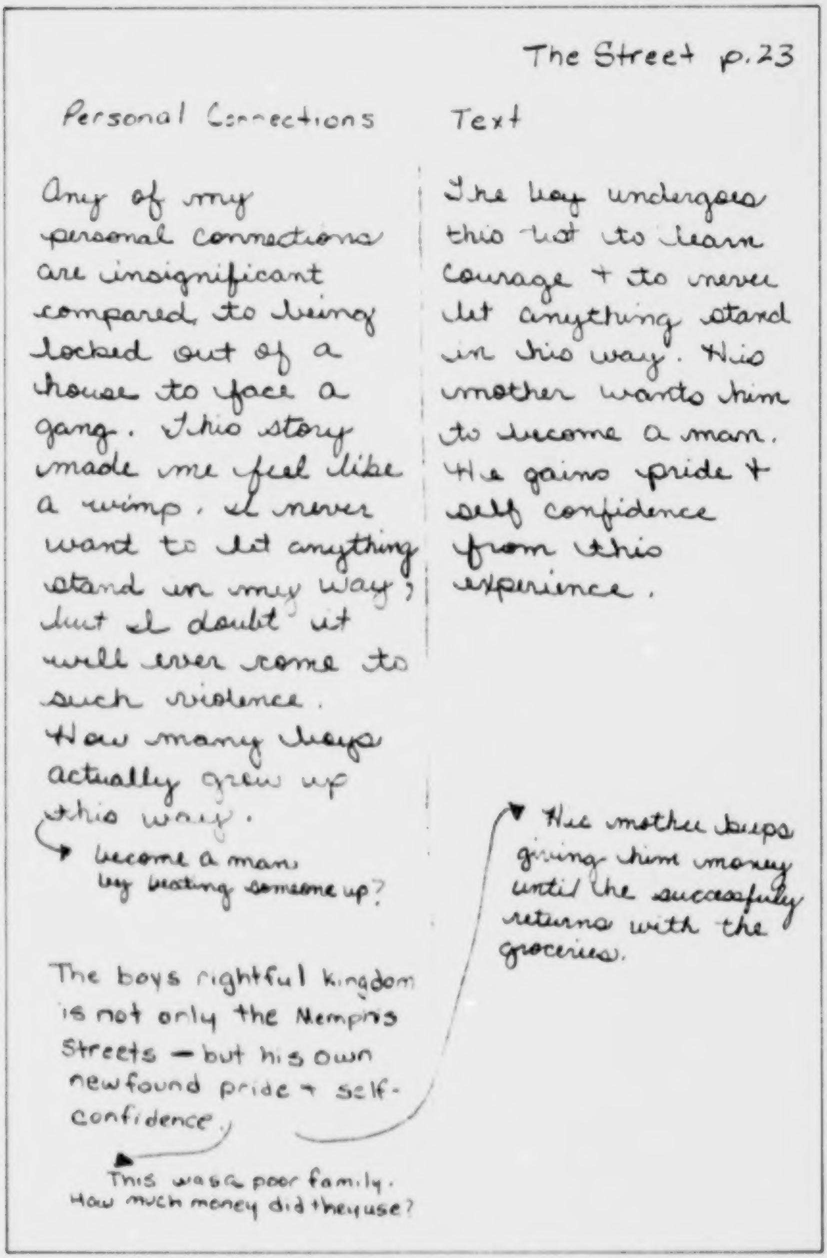
> One certain insight was in the poem "The Song of Youth." The phrase, "a canoe, still smelled of new wood," tells you that the canoe is new. Like the boat, the youth is also young and has never explored new parts of the world. He is ready to move out into new places because he is tired of the same village where he has always lived. The youth also wants to learn more as well as see more. This reminds me of my brother going off to college. When it was time to leave, he was very ready because he was tired of Birmingham and wanted to go somewhere far away and different. Like my brother, the youth imagines the places he will visit as a Golden Age where there are perfect people living like gods. But soon he will find that people are people wherever they live.

Research on language and thinking strongly argues the relationship of writing and learning as well as writing and thinking. Stated simply, the relationship between writing and thinking enables us to discover previously obscured ideas that lead in a chain of associations to other ideas. Writing seems to be the triggering mechanism that fires-up the dynamo and engages the students deeply in thinking. Writing helps students become engaged enough to establish their own agendas in the English classroom. One of my students described this process in her self-evaluation:

> The learning log took me awhile to get the hang of, but I think it was worthwhile. It helps me identify my emotions about current events and the stories we read. My entries have gotten longer as I have continued with this. I associate much more with what I read, and I develop my ideas much more. I started out just summarizing the stories, then I started associating, and finally I began developing my ideas on my own.

Yes, exactly what I wanted to hear, a student who had begun to develop her own ideas. She went on to respond personally to two poems "The City" by Constantine Cavafy and "pity this busy monster, manunkind" by E. E. Cummings:

> Both of these poems upset me a little. It seems to me that the author feels that each step forward in progress is a



The Street p.23

Personal Connections	Text
Any of my personal connections are insignificant compared to being locked out of a house to face a gang. This story made me feel like a wimp. I never want to let anything stand in my way, but I doubt it will ever come to such violence. How many boys actually grew up this way.	The boy undergoes this test to learn courage + to never let anything stand in his way. His mother wants him to become a man. He gains pride + self confidence from this experience.

become a man by beating someone up?

His mother keeps giving him money until he successfuly returns with the groceries.

The boys rightful kingdom is not only the Memphis Streets — but his own newfound pride + self-confidence.

This was a poor family. How much money did they use?

This is a learning log in double-entry format.

> step back and that what mistakes humans make are irrecoverable. Do these authors feel that our environment is being polluted beyond recovery? Is it? What could be done to reduce this pollution? Nothing? Is nuclear waste too strong a pollution to control? Has man's step into the nuclear age made our world worse or better? Pollution seems to be in everything we have or do, even in the air we breathe and water we drink. Of course, there is the big question--if nuclear war occurs, is our planet going to become uninhabitable forever? Does that really matter? It seems to me we are heading that way already in other forms of pollution.

This student was well on her way toward investigation of a topic that interested her very much--her own survival. James Moffett suggests that all quality writing which speaks with the author's voice begins with the author's personal engagement with the subject (4). Moffett's point is that writers are naturally led into expository writing from personal interests they wish to pursue. Investigation is often the bridge between the two. This movement from personal interest to investigation is exactly what happened with two of my students, Wayne and Kelly.

Early in the year, Wayne, a 15-year-old football player, had written about a black friend he had had in Columbus, Georgia when he was about six years old. The memory was special because this was the only black person Wayne had ever known. Wayne's writing response group loved hearing the story and persuaded him to read it to the entire class. Later, in social studies class, he wrote about Martin Luther King, Jr.: "I wish I had been alive back then in the 'sixties when racism existed so I could have fought it!"

In November, Wayne began to read up on the KKK and launched his own investigation into racial issues. He explained later how his interest came about:

> There are many movies about the cruelties to blacks by racist people. Most of the people are in the KKK. It hits me very hard when people judge other people by the color of their skin. I decided to write an argumentative paper after I had written about my friend in Georgia.
>
> I learned much from this paper. I learned how much more I disliked the Klan. These people have no sympathy for minorities. I also learned that I would like to pursue this topic even more.

Wayne had established his own agenda; he had reached the degree of engagement where significant learning could take place. His formal writing on the subject eventually led him to look seriously at the values underlying a democracy: "The United States government," he concluded, "has the right to legally abolish any group that threatens the lives and well-being of any of its citizens."

What more can we ask of our students than that they become thinkers with concern for their fellow human beings? Attention to what it means to be human certainly belongs at the heart of any humanities program. I want it to be the heart and soul of our writing program. Since art emerges from the inner self, what better way to learn to respond to the literary arts than to navigate via a student's own emotions and experiences? The affective and cognitive belong together in the arts; separating them never occurred to my students.

Kelly, a tall, pretty girl with brown curly hair and a kind heart, poignantly shared this simple truth as she talked about her writing. She explained about choosing her topic for a position paper that was required of all ninth-grade students:

> I chose my topic, the Vietnam War, because of one of the pieces I did the first nine weeks of school. I wrote in my log about Ken Kelly (for whom she was named), my cousin who was

> shot down in Vietnam. After writing that, I realized how little I knew about the war. I had a vague idea what it was about, of course, but I wanted to know more. . . . But, when the facts started piling up, I was so confused I didn't know what side I was on. Following your suggestion, I sat down and wrote down the arguments for both sides. That cleared things up and I decided that I was against U. S. involvement. . . . The Ken paper was extremely difficult because the thoughts were so painful. He is also a very private thing to me--it's hard to open up. While I was writing the Vietnam paper, I kept thinking about an American cemetery in Normandy, France that I visited this summer. It was just row upon row upon row of white crosses. I cried for hours, thinking about all the pain and suffering. I felt exactly the same kind of horror researching and writing this paper. I guess my writing is so painful to me because it's usually so personal.

We cannot expect students to find their way around in literature if we try to control learning. One of my colleagues criticized my allowing the students to spend so much time on "social studies" topics, such as racial issues and the Vietnam War. Why weren't the students writing about literature? I responded by asking if Wayne or Kelly would have benefitted from my interference. Neither Wayne nor Kelly followed the process through to another investigative project, but they understood thoroughly the personal nature of literature and writing. Learning to navigate meant getting touch in with their own feelings and experiences.

To satisfy my doubting colleague, however, I offer two log entries from other students who were writing about literature. Ryan wrote about "Annabel Lee":

> "Annabel Lee," by Edgar Allan Poe, tells me a lot about the author, because it was written shortly after Poe's young bride passed away. Poe was a very poor man, and lived most of his life passed out in city streets. In this poem, I think Poe is relating things in it to his own life. For instance, Poe says that Annabel's "highborn kinsmen came and bore her away from me," which may show that he thinks the rich, "highborn" people are the cause of much of his problems, or have taken away the few luxuries of his life. Also in "Annabel Lee," Poe says that the angels of heaven were jealous of the love between him and Annabel, which leads you to believe that he may blame heaven for the death of his real bride. But the question raised in my mind since, incidentally, Poe's wife was also his cousin and almost a child, is: was Poe trying to convince himself that there was nothing wrong with his marriage to his cousin? Something that leads me to believe this is that Poe said, "I was a child, and she as a child," maybe to show that they were innocent of any wrong doing, and undeserving of any punishment from heaven.

Isn't it wonderful to know that teenagers are thinkers when we turn them loose with literature rich with the complexities of life! When I first heard Dellinger read examples of her students thinking about literature, I knew that was what I wanted from my own students. Perhaps Tolstoy said it best: "To the teacher the simplest and most general appears as the easiest, whereas for a pupil only the complex and living appears easy" (qtd. in Berthoff 146).

So it was also with Alison, an energetic young lady who dealt with the existential poems of E. E. Cummings and Stephen Crane:

> This poem by Stephen Crane is related to E. E. Cummings's poem because each shows a universe where man is just a small creature. In "A Man Said to the Universe," the universe was un-

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impressed by the little man who had made his existence known. In E. E. Cummings poem, a man "plays with the bigness of his littleness," which means he realizes that he doesn't count for that much, because his littleness is so immense. The universe in Stephen Crane's poem is implying that he has no obligation to the little man who speaks to him.

A heavy lesson for a 14-year-old? You bet, but this student was navigating for herself, taking the ultimate risk of thinking for herself, as were the other students quoted here. The value of the learning log is that the reader becomes a more disciplined, yet creative, thinker. Navigating English waters via the learning log is a slowed process that allows the active construction of meaning by the individual (Berthoff 44). No other reader will construe exactly the same meaning. That uniqueness is the beauty of reading critically; it is the ultimate growth factor in producing lifelong, appreciative readers of good literature; and it is the reason we teachers must stand back and allow our students to find their own way.

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Prewriting: Assignments and Atmosphere

Mary Ann Rygiel

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As Samuel Johnson, eminent eighteenth-century essayist and dictionary maker, was his own best subject, so are we all. This awareness underlies a new emphasis on personal writing in recent high school composition and grammar textbooks. Students are invited to draw on their own experiences as well as on the results of guided self-analysis as the raw material for writing assignments. Nevertheless, assignments are still assignments, inert inky black words labeled exercise number so-and-so, lying on pages stitched together and bound by hard, angular textbook covers. Assignments are piles of words in search of many authors. But together teachers and students can make those cold, inert words warm and glowing. In this article, I would like to focus on two aspects of the teacher's role in the prewriting stage of the writing process.

One aspect of prewriting is the quality of the teacher's directions to students: how literally and exactly must each student follow the textbook directions? While some structure is necessary, of course, many creative students find a too-literal approach stifling. This stifling is evident in the concern of one of my ninth-grade students, who has commented repeatedly that he does not like to write under pressure, in a rush, because of his dislike of producing writing that is "common." Just as Estelle made Dickens's Pip smart from the stinging insult of being labeled "common," this student has a finely tuned internal mechanism which makes his cheeks glow red-hot red when he accuses his labor in writing of being "common."

Since many good young writers are worried about being ordinary in their wordsmithing, whether or not they all individually make the word "common" as highly connotative as this particular student does, I think teachers should try to find cures for commonness. Here is one example. A textbook assignment directed the students to write a paragraph about a race they had seen, being sure to narrate as an observer, and in a specified sequence. If the assignment were taken literally, it would result in a lot of formulaic writing with such scopic formulas as "rippling muscles," "sweaty, glistening bodies," "tensed straining towards the finish line," and, why not?, the "joy of victory, the agony of defeat." Instead of forcing students to hew to the literal line of the assignment, I encouraged them to think of the word *race* metaphorically.

I also provided examples of what I meant. While races in swimming and track were literally races, the gobbling of my nine year old at the table in order to bolt out the door to hit a tennis ball in the driveway is also a race. I have witnessed adults race with each other to get the conversation floor at the dinner table. I have raced to clean up my children's rooms and raced to clean up the house before having company come for dinner. Parents have raced around our sprawling high school campus on Open House night, breathlessly going from one ten-minute class to another (and usually ending up exhausted somewhere between fourth and fifth period). I have witnessed a cat, paw in point and belly to the ground, stalking a squirrel before the squirrel's race to the safety of a tall tree. Also, I've seen the college student named Beef winning the 30 second race of naming the MTV stars on the nine televisions on the camp show *Remote Control.*

Student responses were fruitful, varied, and not "common." Among the topics written on were the race to get to school in the morning, the race against a classmate in test-taking, the race against time in a demanding schedule of school and extra-curricular activities, the race of animals to eat proffered food, and the race of two people for a soccer ball. Since many students are concerned with being guilty of being "common," they welcome assignments which are structured yet flexible enough to allow diverse responses.

A second aspect of prewriting is how teachers lay the groundwork for an assignment, both in discussion of the directions and especially in building a conceptual base which allows students to understand the assignment in a broader context. For example, I recently asked students to follow the directions in their composition and grammar book which instructed them to describe the characteristics of their own writing style. You may already be thinking that this sounds like a sure-fire formula for failure in a writing assignment. However, if carefully prepared for, it could work in just the opposite way, and, like Aunt Polly's elixir, might set on fire some of your student writers. My only preliminary caution is to keep the mischievous, resourceful Tom Sawyers in the class away from any unsuspecting cats who might be coaxed to take the dose instead.

The preparation for the assignment consists in establishing a classroom atmosphere in which several premises are at least implicit and are regularly applied in discussions of writers in print. One, no writer is perfect. Two, writers who have achieved the status of being in print have some good qualities in their writing, and those good qualities can be specified. Three, audience awareness is an important dimension of writing and as such is also a characteristic for analysis. You would apply these principles to works being read and discussed in your classroom. In my classroom, we applied these principles to Jesse Stuart's autobiography of his life as a Kentucky rural teacher, *The Thread That Runs So True,* a work required in our ninth-grade curriculum. Students can readily see Jesse Stuart's virtues and weaknesses as a writer. His strengths include his descriptive abilities, including his use of appropriate homey metaphors and similes, his narrative abilities when telling about classroom occurrences or episodes outside class directly related to teaching, and his integrity and sincerity of tone. His deficiencies lie in his rather dull narration of events related to school board politics and also his tendency to give in to the autobiographer's impulse to focus heavily on the self as the star or hero of each encounter.

Because we spend three weeks reading Jesse Stuart, an adult commentator on education, this year I paired a rather surprising *Newsweek* "My Turn" column with the required Stuart text. The column, by Berkeley freshman Graham Charles, was entitled "A Teenager Talks Back," and it addressed some issues in contemporary education from a teenager's point of view. Or did it? My high school freshmen maintained that Charles did not write like a typical teenager, with his references to Rousseau, Plato, William Bennett, and Allan Bloom (all this in 1000 words!), but rather, like someone who knew that to enter an adult publication he would have to write like an adult. My students also noted the ironic security of Charles's assault on the SAT, now that he has his admission to a selective school, presumably based on his successful SAT performance.

Given this background of honest, constructive discussion of some writers in print with which we were familiar, students were settled in a context in which they could review and describe their own writing forthrightly. And that they did.

Many students resist the idea of being labeled in a certain way, of having to say that they always write in a set, specifiable way. Consider, for example, the following statement by Auburn High School ninth grader Greg Neal:

> I write. It requires no thought. This paragraph is supposed to be an example of my "style." How should I know? I have really no style. My style is me. What am I? I am what I am. Is it right to be judged for something you have no control over? So I can only mention this. I like stories that nobody really notices, stories that are "weird." I write what I want, when I want, how I want. I also like to use descriptive adjectives, I wish to put you in the setting, I want to put me in the setting. So whatever this script can tell you . . . I hope you'll understand it.

I think we can. In this personal declaration of independence, this student is saying that he does not want the restriction of a label. He is also calling our attention to another student concern: what criteria are used to judge any piece of student writing? If a student writes personally and honestly about, say, disliking to visit an elderly, sick relative, is it fair to respond to that heartfelt sentiment with a rather insensitive grading based only on formal aesthetic criteria? Naturally, I would say "no," siding with the students on this issue. The criteria, which should be specified in advance of the final draft for the final grade, should depend on the nature of the assignment--with a heavy focus on purpose and audience. Correct mechanics are not always the primary purpose; a Master Mechanic is not always the sole audience.

Other students did not find self-labeling such a prison. They confronted the task of describing their writing with disarming honesty. Consider the following statement by Auburn High School ninth grader Laura Yoo:

> My characters are based on imaginary and real people. The characters I focus on are based on who I'd like to be and are in situations I would find interesting. That's what I like about writing--anything can happen.

This writer sees her writing as an arena of pure potentiality, one in which interesting roles and situations can be tried on relatively risk-free. The following writer, a Vonnegut lover, shows a high degree of self-awareness about the unusual situations which attract him as a writer:

> I tend to write to the dark, humorous side of everything. The characters I imagine are twisted, maimed, replaced comedians, usually carrying something large and lethal. They are dropped into a future that is dark, dank, flawed, loud, and full of reformed hippies (see?). Then they have a choice of being beat up, shot, robbed, or spending a night at the Improv telling bad jokes to a drunk and half-dead audience (see, see!).

When our students write about their own compositions, they tend to write expressively; that is, according to James Kinneavy's scheme, they see this assignment as an opportunity for self-expression. Another purpose recognized by Kinneavy as the literary aim is known to the classical rhetorician as one of three "offices" of the rhetorician, namely to delight (Lanham 114).

Since we neglect this purpose at our peril, we shall not neglect it here. Consider this exuberant response by Auburn High School ninth grader Kati Shevlin to the invitation to describe one's own writing style:

> When I start writing a paragraph or composition, I usually try to pick something I know about, like I'll write about a description of something, not about the election or that stuff. When I start, I imagine one nice, neat, orderly paragraph with about 15 sentences, all in nice rows, like a nice little house in a nice little neighborhood with the happy housewife to stay home, and the happy hubby to go to the office--well, that's another characteristic of my writing. I get off the subject, and when I get off the subject, I get off the subject! Like I'll be talking about a trumpet, and then Band, and then Band Spring trip to the beach, then beaches, then the Caribbean, then bananas! So I'll talk about fruit when I meant to talk about a trumpet! Anyway, about my writing, I like to describe things I see and can see in my mind. But sometimes I'll describe things so well with so many adjectives and adverbs, that it'll turn into a paradox! Another characteristic of mine is I tend to end abruptly, as you are about to see.

This paragraph was such a delight to read that I am glad that the new composition books present assignments that lead to such spritely musings. The new books have allowed for this possibility by refusing to shackle every paragraph, hand and foot, in the manacles of topic sentence, three detail sentences, summary sentence. In fact, before we ask our students to write, I suggest we try dosing ourselves with Aunt Polly's elixir. And don't try slipping it to the cat.

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Adventures In Junk Mail

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Neither rain, sleet, darkness of night, nor recent increases in postal rates have slowed the relentless tide of third-class mail. From all over the country it comes in an endless stream, clogging mail boxes and filling trash cans with its bulk. "Another stupid junk mailing," you mutter and toss it away with a cursory glance. But before you throw out that "junk," take a closer look. Many teaching tasks can be accomplished with these refugees from the wastebasket--and the price is definitely right.

Editing and Document Design

One of the most often missed parts of the Alabama Basic Competency Test is correct business letter form. To aid students in learning the form, photocopy and distribute a correctly formatted letter. Ask students to find and copy the following items:

a. The return address
b. The salutation
c. The mark of punctuation after the salutation
d. The complimentary close
e. The punctuation after the complimentary close

A close study of these items will show several differences between a standard business letter and a mass-mailing letter. For example, students may notice that the mass-mailing letter does not have a date or that it is not addressed to an individual. Students might also note the use of graphics, where words might be underlined or written in different color ink. Some letters have facsimile cursive writing in the margins and use other formatting devices to call attention to the letter's message. As a follow-up, students could create their own logos and letterheads. With access to a computer, students could use these letterheads in writing real or mock letters to different audiences and for varying purposes. Some sources of information about letter writing follow this article.

More skilled students might be given letters with errors in form or spelling (and many will have them) and asked to find and correct the errors. Common errors include the substitution of a comma or semicolon for a colon after the salutation and other punctuation and spelling errors.

Audience Analysis

Students might evaluate the appropriateness of a letter's language for the presumed audience. In the same context, the letters might be useful in teaching basic demographics--to what segment of the population does this letter aim to appeal? How can you tell?

Some mass-mailing letters are well-written, lively, and even entertaining. Others are not. In addition, length varies from one piece of junk mail to the next. Contrary to what might be expected, many junk mail letters are several pages long, with four pages not at all uncommon. Some advertisers write long sales letters because research has shown that people are more likely to take longer letters seriously. Another difference between mass-mailing letters and standard business correspondence is the extensive use of post scripts. People will often skim a letter, but read the P.S. Therefore, the P.S. is where the call to action, whatever it may be, is usually repeated.

Writing Persuasively

Junk mail can also be used to teach methods of persuasion. As Jan Farrington points out, "Every good piece of persuasive writing tries to find 'the offer they can't refuse'" (6). Every piece of persuasive writing, be it junk mail or a formal essay, addresses two questions:

- What does the reader want?
- What can I offer the reader as a means of filling one or more of those wants?

Experts in persuasive letter writing use what they call "psychological order," a classic formula which can be followed with most types of writing and which students discover for themselves by examining junk mail. This order begins with ideas of the most interest to the reader, follows with ideas of mutual interest, and ends with ideas of interest to the writer.

Getting the reader's attention is the first order of business for all writing. Junk mail writers often exhibit more imagination than a novelist in creating sensational beginnings. Here are some opening lines from actual letters:

"I'd like to make you an offer that belongs in *The Guinness Book of World Records*."

"There's an important difference between this letter and all the others you've taken out of your mailbox recently. Perhaps you felt it when you touched it . . . a feeling of well-being and psychic unity that crept through your body . . . a suggestion . . . a promise."

"I think you will find this story shocking."

"Just imagine getting a phone call to tell you 'You have won ONE MILLION DOLLARS in cash.'"

"While conducting routine birth and population studies, certain remarkable features about your life have come to our attention."

Jan Farrington uses the initials AIDA for a formula that is easy to use and remember:

A - Get the reader's ATTENTION.
I - Create INTEREST.
D - Produce a DESIRE--to buy, to do, to choose.
A - Ask for ACTION--a sale, a decision, a vote.

Identifying Propaganda

Once students learn to spot junk mail formulas, they can apply them to political rhetoric, letters to the editor, advertisements in all media--and their own writing. Hugh Rank discusses the five steps in the persuasive process used by commercials:

1.	Attention-getting	("Hi!")
2.	Confidence-building	("Trust me!")
3.	Desire-stimulating	("You need!")
4.	Urgency-stressing	("Hurry!")
5.	Response-seeking	("Buy!")

Students might enjoy analyzing television and print commercials for the five items and then comparing the effectiveness of those commercials with that of the junk mail.

To encourage participation (and build up your supply of junk mail for future use), you might ask students to bring in some of the junk mail their family receives. Perhaps you might even have the class vote on which letter is the most interesting, the silliest, the most stupid, or the most effective.

No matter what you choose to do with these letters, the next time the letter carrier leaves that not-ready-for-first-class mail in your box, don't throw it away--teach with it!

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Rainbow Writing

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As a graduate student, the only way I found from the nightmare of 400 index cards to the well-written research paper was over the rainbow. Desperate for help in organizing all the ideas I had garnered from so many sources, I reached for an old box of crayons left on the den floor by my daughter. The familiar waxy aroma of the colors made me smile, as did the vision of seeing myself coding cards for a research paper with fat crayolas--a separate color for each basic concept that had surfaced in my study. The following morning, the crayons back with the coloring books, I had only to shuffle the cards according to their rainbow colors. Such heavy material, yet it flew into neat piles, ready for paragraphing.

Today I carry bright new crayons into my high school writing classes. Ninth graders, though newly graduated from childhood, make no attempt to hide their curiosity about the crayons. Before they do any writing or coloring, we discuss the topic assigned--honesty, self-discipline, or violence, for instance. The students discuss inherited values, their own beliefs, and examples from their own lives or from their observations of others. Then the students are instructed to write for 15 minutes without taking the pencil off the page. They should let their ideas flow, without monitoring grammar, syntax, or thought.

While they are immersed in the free writing, I lay three crayons of differing hues on each student's desk. When the 15 minutes are up, I instruct the students to take a red crayon and go through every line they have written, coloring words, phrases, and sentences that relate to a single idea. This first group will be the red idea and will be listed as Roman numeral one in the outline of their essay. The students should not hesitate to color just part of a given sentence if only half of it seems to relate to their first idea.

Then with the second color, blue, the students shade all phrases and sentences which pertain to the next point they would like to make. This second point will be the blue idea and will be stated in their outlines as Roman numeral two. The third crayon, perhaps green, will designate all sentences relating to a final major theme. Roman numeral three of the outline will reflect the third paragraph in the body of the essay.

Crayons back in the pencil trough, the revelation comes, "Hey, I've got a rainbow on my paper!"

"My outline's got one too."

The correlation between outlining and writing a draft of the essay becomes colorfully apparent. The students begin to organize, transferring all their red ideas to a new sheet, forming words and phrases into a single, unified paragraph. The same procedure quickly builds two more paragraphs containing the blue and green concepts. Some students will believe the paper is complete at this point. At least one more draft is necessary, however, to incorporate a thesis paragraph at the beginning and a conclusion paragraph at the end.

The process is easily learned so that students proceed to work through it on their own after the second assignment. The sense of accomplishment they feel after learning to write an essay in this manner gives them confidence that they can write a good essay assigned in any class.

Dreamweaver

Lenore T. Cooper
Birmingham, Alabama

Night creeps in to sit on the eyelids,
calling me to the land of dreams.
I fight to write a few more lines
or read a few more pages, but
The dreamweaver is spinning a shroud
around the day just past.
Consciousness drifts slowly and
surely away--Id, Ego, Superego--struggling
for control.

Reading and Writing in the Primary Grades

By Maryann Manning, Gary Manning, Roberta Long and Bernice Wolfson.
Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1987. 80 pp.

Reviewed by
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The authors of this book are professors at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, and their extensive experience in public school classrooms is reflected in every page of this practical handbook for developing literacy in elementary students. The Mannings have worked closely with Dr. Constance Kamil, a well-known authority on Piagetian constructivist theory. They begin their book by relating constructivism to the language arts.

The constructivist view of learning is that learners are not empty vessels into which information is poured but rather active constructors of knowledge from their experience. In the area of language arts, social interaction with peers and teacher is the pivot for this construction of knowledge. The child brings prior knowledge of any subject to its study. Through the exchange of viewpoints with others, this knowledge is either reaffirmed in the light of new information or revised to accommodate the new information. The child expresses or clarifies this new knowledge by means of activities such as writing, dramatization, or art.

Practical application of the constructivist theory is provided in the following chapters of the book. The authors divide these chapters into practices for developing literacy in reading and practices for developing literacy in writing.

Good literature should be the backbone of any reading program. The authors advocate such whole language practices in reading as using big books, recorded readings, choral readings, cloze procedures, and reading conferences. One of the most helpful suggestions in this chapter is how to use basals and workbooks in constructivist ways. For those who must use these materials, the Mannings urge self-selection of basal stories followed by reading conferences with the teacher. They advise careful selecting of workbook pages by teachers and allowing students to work in groups to justify answers to worksheets. They recommend Goodman's methods of reading assessment, aided and unaided retelling of stories, and miscue analysis.

Literacy in written expression can best be accomplished by the self-selection of topics, daily writing, and writing conferences with teachers. The Mannings have done research on the stages of writing development in kindergarten children. This research has led them to the opposition of any formal teaching or testing of spelling in the early years, as formal teaching and testing may hinder the child's development of a "coherent system of how our written language works." Again, they address the issues of assessing students and adapting the existing language arts curriculum to a constructivist approach. The authors recommend allowing the child to select a polished, edited piece of writing to be graded by the teacher. Teachers required to follow lists of objectives or skills can use writing conferences to introduce or reinforce these objectives.

The authors refer frequently to the work of the Goodmans, Calkins, and Holdaway. The book concludes with an excellent annotated bibliography. Also included is a list of the authors' favorite books for children, predictable books, and big book publishers.

Reading and Writing in the Primary Grades provides the reader with practical suggestions for selecting meaningful, functional language arts activities for the elementary student. The book is unique in its attempt to provide a solid theoretical rationale for the whole language approach to reading and writing. It is an effective prelude to Calkins' *The Art of Writing* and Holdaway's *The Foundations of Literacy*.

The Word for Teaching is Learning: Essays for James Britton

Ed. Martin Lightfoot and Nancy Martin. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1988. 320 pp. $17.50.

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James E.Colquitt
Livingston University, Livingston, Alabama

James Britton is an undeniable force in contemporary English education. Lightfoot and Martin have put together a collection of essays with enough range to demonstrate his considerable influence and sufficient quality to truly honor him. The best essays in "Teaching the Mother Tongue as a Model for Education," the first of five parts, are Courtney Cazden's "Social Interaction as Scaffold: The Power and Limits of a Metaphor" and Gordon Pradl's "Learning Listening." Cazden takes J. S. Bruner's scaffold metaphor and demonstrates that though the term "has become a common caption for the adult's role" in games and in children's education, "it is a good name only if we remember that this is a very special kind of scaffold--one that self-destructs gradually as the need lessens and the child's competence grows." Classifying listening into that "which serves the other" (responsive or reflective, supportive, and protective) and "listening which serves the self" (performing or rehearsing and reconstructive), Pradl links the teacher's skill at listening to the student's development of power and confidence in both spoken and written language.

Essays in part two explore "Literacy and the Growth of Consciousness." Henrietta Dombey's "Stories at Home and at School" takes extended examples of a mother reading with her daughter at home and a teacher reading with her students in the classroom and demonstrates that though it obviously cannot duplicate the former, the latter mode can include many of its characteristics. Even in a group the students can be "initiated into the process of reading as a process of active meaning construction in which the reader makes personal sense of whole texts." In "'I wanna write jes like in dat book!': Talk and Its Role in the Shared Journal Experience," Amanda Branscombe and Janet Taylor (from Auburn University, working with Barbara Thompson at Jim Pearson School) explore a tendency of classrooms to deny opportunities for social interaction. They use shared journal writing as a means of developing students' coordination of "others' perspectives and information with their own." The authors provide many detailed examples and an appendix which defines and describes the steps for the shared journal.

Part three, "Coming to Terms with the World," is clearly the strongest of the collection's sections simply because it is the most critical. Tony Burgess's "On Difference: Cultural and Linguistic Diversity and English Teaching" should be required reading for not only all teachers of English but also their supervisors. He argues that attention to "Difference, ethnicity, class, gender, tradition, social practice, cultural dominance and subordination" is not just a moral issue; history tells us that conflict and differences in cultural experience cannot be divided from "the general purposes in talking, reading, and writing." Questioning Britton's "participating and spectating" roles, Peter Medway demonstrates the importance of other roles to be taken--pursuit of pleasure, for one--by students as ways "to stretch themselves linguistically." The pursuit of pleasure he finds more productive and more natural then fragmentation, subjectivism, formalism, and literariness, which can promote wrong motivations and false ordering of the world. Mike Torbe's "Doing Things with Language: Skills, Functionalism and Social Context" attacks the catch phrases "basic skills" and "functional literacy" for reflecting a false analogy between physical skills and language operations: "The true basic skills are about social dealings where language expresses and realizes individual identity in the context of shared community intentions." In "Stories of Stories: Footnotes on Sly Gossipy Practices," Harold Rosen works from Britton's ideas on the relationship of narrative and memory to demonstrate that creative retelling is superior to the often required recall. If the goal is creativity in language, Rosen asks, why should the student be required to reproduce an existing text?

Part four, "Implementing Change," focuses on the difficulties anyone committed to changing the way English is taught must face. Don Rutledge's "Institutionalizing Change: The Problem of System Beliefs" identifies the political currents in and around the Toronto school system and explains how they were accommodated and transcended as the teachers moved toward a "language-in-use" curriculum, one that incorporates more talking and writing by the students. Martin Lightfoot's "Teaching English as a Rehearsal of Politics" traces efforts to reform the English curriculum in UK schools since the mid-seventies. Examining particularly an effort to shift from "an attempt to mediate established values and canons" to "a means of assisting the child's own linguistic development," he soberly identifies the most important difficulty: ". . . to seek change without threatening (or being seen to threaten) the fundamental structure of the system."

The essays have flaws. The punctuation of "But, as my colleague Denise Wolf, points out (personal communication) that further deprives the students of the possibility of incorporating the more difficult syntax and vocabulary into their mental language system and may only make them fall farther behind" makes an ugly sentence also baffling. " . . . as one of the children sits *of* Mrs G.'s knee" and ". . . far from altering the main thrust of the *teachers* activity" are similar oversights. On a more significant level, why Cazden would consider "'self-improving systems'" as "felicitous words" for "learners" is totally beyond me. Too often, as well, there is a need to provide labels as if they added support even when that support is unnecessary and interruptive. For example, in a dramatic paragraph partly narrating and partly analyzing a teacher's dialogue with her students, Dombey jolts the reader with, "Instead she focuses on enlarging and elaborating the event structure or, as Barthes would call it, the code (Barthes, 175a)," which is somewhat like saying, "Let's use my car; it's a BMW."

The most serious problem, however, is the failure of many of the essayists and the editors to recognize that "in the manner of" is faint praise. A Britton statement with which Martin opens and closes her introduction includes the following: "'The value of the research lies in supplying the starting point for many such discoveries. . . .'" While some of the essays serve the purpose of implicitly and often quite explicitly praising their source and to some degree introducing his work, the essayists who tend to work toward Britton's already formulated "starting points" achieve little more than describing their personal "discoveries" of those points. These include Douglas Barnes's "Knowledge as Action," Myra Barrs's "Drawing a Story: Transitions between Drawing and Writing," Margaret Meek's "How Texts Teach What Readers Learn," Claire Woods's "Places for Evolving Autobiography: English Classes at Work in the Curriculum," Arthur Applebee's "The Enterprise We Are Part of: Learning to Teach," Garth Boomer's "Negotiating the System: A Letter to James Britton," and the whole "Annexe: For Jimmy Britton, for the Record," a collection of personal tributes (hagiographies?). For an introduction to Britton's work, one would better turn to his quite accessible *Language and Learning*.

The remaining essays, however, are themselves starting points for discoveries and for that reason provide, I think, the ultimate compliment. They certainly are enough to make this book worthy of the attention of Alabama teachers of English at all grade levels.

Writing to Learn

By William Zinsser. New York: Harper & Row, 1988. 256 pp. $15.95.

Reviewed by
Kay K. Brown
Saks High School, Anniston, Alabama

In the foreword to *Writing to Learn*, William Zinsser states: "I wrote this book to try to ease two fears that American education seems to inflict on all of us in some form. . . . One is the fear of writing. . . . The other is the fear of subjects we don't think we have an aptitude for." By using a successful combination of personal narrative, didactic insertions, and fine writing samples, Zinsser accomplishes his purpose.

In the beginning, he tells the story of his unsuccessful attempt to learn high school chemistry. This failure had jeopardized the reputation of his prep school and the author's chances for entrance into Princeton. Fortunately, he was allowed to substitute Latin for chemistry on his entrance exam. This experience with chemistry, however, was simply one more evidence to Zinsser that he was too inept to learn the hard sciences and had best stay with the humanities. He compares his experience with that of the science or math student who cannot use words to suit his English teacher, becomes convinced that he cannot write, and gives up trying for life. The waste and the misconception are the same for both.

Some years after graduating from Princeton, Zinsser became an editor and found, in his experiences with helping other writers, that he was indeed learning some of those subjects that had been inaccessible to him as a student. This achievement inspired his conviction that writing about any subject enhances the writer's ability to understand and learn that subject. The act of writing well is, in fact, a product of thinking well and should be a valuable tool in comprehending new and difficult material. He further concluded that a clear thinker on any subject can write about that subject so that the layman can read and understand.

An experience which further confirmed his theories resulted from his acceptance of an invitation from Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota, to become an advisor in the inception of a program based on the idea of writing across the curriculum. This experience was Zinsser's introduction to writing across the curriculum, an idea which seemed to support his own theories. On a voluntary basis, faculty members at this college had agreed to adopt writing as a tool for learning other subjects. Seventy-five courses in various subjects would require writing as an integral part of the course, with teachers assisting students in a writing process. Before graduating, each student would be required to complete three of these courses.

Zinsser spent several days listening to and talking with professors about their ideas for using writing. He found excitement and enthusiasm. Writing was no longer to be owned by the English teachers but instead was a skill which would be shared by all teachers. On a later visit to Gustavus Adolphus after the courses had been put into effect, Zinsser was again excited to hear the professors recount how they and their students had found writing to be an enhancement to learning. Remembering his own experiences, Zinsser thought that if only he had been encouraged to write about what he understood or did not understand in chemistry, he might have been a successful chemistry student.

The second half of this book contains an impressive group of writing models. Using recommendations from professors and from experts in several fields, Zinsser collected samples of "good" writing. The final seven chapters, divided by subjects from "Earth, Sea, and Sky" to "Worlds of Music," provide diverse samples. Demonstrating his theory that clear thinking on even a hard subject can produce writing that is understandable to almost anyone, Zinsser presents writings from recognized authorities in various fields. In his words, he has assembled passages from works of men and women "who wrote with clarity, simplicity, warmth and enjoyment." There are rich and fascinating excerpts from Rachel Carson's *The Sea Around Us*, Hyatt Mayor's *Prints and People*, Charles Darwin's *The Voyage of the Beagle*, Albert Einstein's *Relativity: The Special and the General Theory*, to name a few. Not only does Zinsser provide the examples, but he provides his own personal analyses of the clarity and effectiveness in each piece of writing. For almost every sample, he shows how the best writing reveals a human being, a personality, to whom the information is important. True to the teachings in his earlier work, *On Writing Well*, Zinsser consistently admires a well-structured declarative sentence and a writer's ability to say clearly and exactly in the fewest possible words what he or she means.

Though anyone interested in writing should find reading *On Writing Well* profitable, it is probably most helpful for those teachers in junior and senior high schools and colleges. Except in one chapter on mathematics, Zinsser gives few actual suggestions for use in the classroom, but he did not set out to write a book of teaching suggestions. The book does, however, support some of the strongest recent theories of teaching writing (writing as a process, writing across the curriculum, use of models in teaching writing) and presents these theories in an easily understood style. Zinsser's book will give the teacher who is not informed about writing across the curriculum insight into the purpose and intent of this program. Not the least valuable aspect of this book is that it provides an accessible way to introduce writing across the curriculum to colleagues in other subject areas. Zinsser should win the heart of every English teacher with his assertion that English teachers "shouldn't have to assume the whole responsibility for imparting a skill that's basic to every area of life. That should be everybody's job. That's citizenship."

In The Middle: Writing, Reading and Learning With Adolescents

By Nancie Atwell. Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook, 1987. 295 pp. $12.50.

Reviewed by
Patricia S. Gaston
Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama

In The Middle is an applied methods text designed to explain and demonstrate Nancie Atwell's approach to teaching language arts to middle school students. It documents Atwell's evolution as a teacher of writing--specifically, her breaking away from the set junior high school curriculum at Boothbay Harbor Grammar School and her founding of the Boothbay Writing Project as an alternative to that curriculum. Atwell's approach is "needs-oriented" in that it recognizes what writers need (time, space, structure, and instruction) to become skilled at writing, what readers need to do that task well, and what teachers need as writers and readers themselves. The goal of Atwell's approach is independence for students so that what they learn and produce while writing or reading becomes theirs both as life skills and as ways of seeing into and exploring life.

Atwell insists that writing and reading are dynamic processes which allow adolescents--those "in the middle"--to explore their changing, highly charged worlds, channel their energies and restlessness, and communicate the strangeness of their experiences during their middle school years. Writing and reading modify these students' feeling of alienation by producing channels for shaping and sharing these feelings with others, while setting up useful communications models for use in later life as well.

Essential to Atwell's method is her definition of herself as perpetual learner. She replaces the role of teacher as dictator and ultimate final authority with that of teacher as guide and fellow student of writing (albeit one a few significant steps farther down the path to perfecting these skills than are her students). At first reading, one may be tempted to call Atwell's approach permissive and unstructured, but this response is more to her practice of "coming out from behind her big desk" than it is to what Atwell actually does once out from behind there. The structure of *In The Middle* itself reveals how well designed and tightly knit her approach is. The text is divided into four main parts: I. Beginnings, in which

Atwell sets the stage for explaining what she has created by describing her own evolution as a middle school teacher, naming those who influenced her decision to change methods (for example, Dixie Goswami, Donald Murray, Donald Graves, and the Bread Loaf School of English Program in Writing), and her deep, abiding affection for young teens; II. Writing Workshop, in which Atwell establishes basic premises concerning what writing is for, what its processes entail, and how to reveal this information to middle schoolers so that they make it their own; III. Reading Workshop, in which similar basic premises are established for the processes of reading; and IV. Connecting Writing and Reading, where Atwell describes the profitability of encouraging young writers to use other, established writers as form and theme models--not so as to make their own work derivative, but to encourage them to see themselves as members of a vast community of writers.

But all of this is not merely romantic speculation or mere pedagogical theory; instead, Atwell tells about what works and what needs more work and provides us with a user's manual for her approach, complete with sample student/teacher dialogues, supplies lists, suggested readings lists, sample workshops and scripts to go with these, descriptions of student notebook organization and samples of student writing, even floor plans for how she rearranged her classroom to suit her task. What we see here is a wealth of immediately useful information, overlaying Atwell's strong sense of what she is about and how she is going to make this project work. Her approach is very structured because it must be, as she tells us; since good writing takes time and since she sees her students for only a class hour per day, there is no time to waste.

Atwell uses the workshop as model for how she conducts both reading and writing classes. Actually she embeds "mini-workshops" (five-minute sessions during which she instructs the group as a whole) in hour-length workshops during which her students work independently, with others for peer editing and evaluation, and with her on a one-on-one basis as she moves about the room. The facts that good writing is audience-oriented and that here the audience is an immediately interactive one are emphasized.

If Atwell is emphatic about the importance of teaching middle schoolers to write well, she is even more urgent about stressing their independent and individualized development of reading skills. Certainly the link between reading and writing as processes and as skills is essential to Atwell's thought. By *writing well*, Atwell means not only competence in grammar and mechanics, but the realization that these are conventions which facilitate written communication--not ends in themselves (and therefore boring, arbitrary formalities at which middle schoolers may roll their eyes and make nasty faces--and they will), but as a means to interaction with a larger human community made up of other readers and writers. Atwell provides a suggested readings list which is heavily oriented toward the experiences and concerns of young teens. Reading levels vary in this list, but topicality and interest level remain high. Atwell's suggestions may indeed mark a significant break with traditional curricula, but her point is that reading can be a pleasure and surely is a link with a world full of useful and personally relevant information. Atwell sees the inability to recognize these truths as serious barriers to true middle school literacy. Young teens may see reading as punishment, as an arbitrarily imposed and inappropriately difficult task from which they derive nothing useful, as an isolating and lonely process. Atwell overcomes these reader resistence strategies by insisting that her students share what they have read and their reactions to these texts immedi-

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ately through the form of written notes to other students or to her, thus linking reading and writing skills and modifying the sometimes alienating experience of reading alone at the same time. Atwell is a self-confessed avid reader; she states that one of the most important functions that any of us can perform as teachers is to expose our students to this tendency in ourselves, to this actual love for our subject and its practice in our own lives as a source of pleasure. Atwell wants nothing less than to create "readers for life."

There is something in *In The Middle* for each of us, no matter what grade level we teach. For one thing, Atwell is remarkably generous about sharing "how to" information in forms specific enough to make implementation possible. For another, each of us can come away from Atwell's text inspired by her energy and insights and, even more importantly, by her vast respect and affection for her students. It is this attitude which makes Atwell's approach to language arts teaching so effective.

The Library of Alabama Classics

Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.

Reviewed by
Leah Rawls Atkins
Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama

In the early 1980s Malcolm MacDonald, the director of the University of Alabama Press, realized that many of the books that form the cultural heritage of Alabama were no longer in print. Library holdings could not meet the demands of teachers, students, and the public for copies of these works. He recommended to the Press that a new series be created to reissue the "books of lasting importance that treat the history and culture of Alabama."

Today there are 23 titles, fiction and non-fiction, in the series. These works include Carl Carmer's *Stars Fell on Alabama*, T. S. Stribling's Pulitzer Prize winning novel, *The Store*, and Lella Warren's epic 1940s best seller, *Foundation Stone*. George Wylie Henderson, a Macon County native and Tuskegee graduate, is the first black author in the series. Henderson was part of the Harlem Renaissance, and his novel *Ollie Miss* is the story of an incredibly strong character, Ollie, who strives to maintain her independence in a man's world just after the turn of the century. A love story of woman and man, people and the land, set in rural Macon County, the novel tells much about the world of black sharecroppers and the agricultural life shared by whites and blacks in early twentieth-century Alabama.

"Down in Mobile they're all crazy, because the Gulf Coast is the kingdom of monkeys, the land of clowns, ghosts and musicians, and Mobile is sweet lunacy's county seat." So Eugene Walter begins his novel *The Untidy Pilgrim*. Published in 1954, this story of a young boy's coming of age won the Lippincott Prize. Douglas Bailey's novel *Devil Make a Third* is set in the Wiregrass and tells the story of a young boy who moves from the farm into a New South city to seek his fortune in business and real estate development.

British critic Alistair Cooke in a review of Mobile's William March wrote in the 1940s that March was a talented

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writer "a whole ionosphere above Faulkner" and "the unrecognized genius of our time." The Library of Alabama Classics includes a collection of March's short stories, *Trial Balance*, which lends itself well for selected inclusion in literature courses. March is well known for his use of irony, and several of the stories provide excellent lesson materials, especially "Personal Letter," which describes the conditions in Nazi Germany in 1932 (March lived in Hamburg at that time, representing Mobile's Waterman Steamship Company), "Whistles," which is set in a small sawmill town in southwest Alabama, and "Runagate Niggers," which is a powerful indictment of racism.

Books in The Library of Alabama Classics are produced in high quality paperback editions, and all of them should be included in every high school library in the state. The non-fiction editions are excellent reference sources and provide many creative ideas for classroom lectures or projects. The novels will enhance a reader's understanding of Alabama and will heighten appreciation of Alabama literature.

Unanswered Prayers

John Croft
Andalusia High School, Andalusia, Alabama

Today at lunch a person said,
"He survived because God answers prayers."
We others simply bowed our heads,
Staring at our peaches, faithless,
Silent.

My father died when I was seven.
What was insufficient about my prayers?
Had my mother no trust or voice for prayers?
Did she but wait, faithless,
Silent?

What of the sons of suffering parents,
Or parents of the tortured child,
Or widows of soldiers slain for others?
Did they but wait, faithless,
Silent?

But if they cried or even whispered hopes,
Did He, the Father, refuse to hear?
Did He, not caring, fail to answer?
Did He let the cup pass from Him, loveless,
Silent?

ACTE To You

Martha Wall, President

As you can see by the publication of our new journal, this has been a busy year for the Alabama Council of Teachers of English. Next year promises to be equally eventful. The purpose of this column is to report on significant happenings in ACTE and our parent organization, NCTE. This column will also provide information about upcoming events and discuss any awards received by our members or by Alabama students. Please help us get the word out. Send announcements and reports of faculty and student achievement at your school to the editor of *Alabama English* or to me.

1988 Fall Conference: The Renaissance Child

The annual Fall Conference of the ACTE, held at Mountain Brook High School in Birmingham on October 7-8, focused on the theme "The Renaissance Child." The opening activity, a "Fine Arts Fair," emphasized the role that imagination has in all learning and featured the art work of many area students. Over 300 participants strolled through the art walk to enjoy the work of artisans, visit exhibits, and talk with professional writers.

Provocative speeches by Gary Sykes on a renaissance in teacher education and George Shea on the interactive classroom were conference highlights. On Saturday morning, 25 workshops on current classroom practices were conducted by Alabama teachers from kindergarten through college. At the luncheon, Alabama's award-winning student writers from the Alabama Penman contest and the NCTE Writing Awards entertained us with their wit and creativity. A special award was given to Sam and Lizette Mitchell for their many years of service to the ACTE. The conference ended with a delightful two-hour workshop with Gabriele Rico.

A Tribute to Sam and Lizette Mitchell

This is an excerpt from the comments Norman McMillan made about Sam and Lizette Mitchell at the 1988 ACTE Fall Conference.

Sam and Lizette Mitchell are known throughout Alabama for their leadership and support in efforts to improve English instruction in all areas--from college to kindergarten. We in ACTE can say that they have been our energizers, they have provided a sense of continuity for our efforts, and they have given generously of both their time and their means. They have also represented us well in regional and national council activities.

Although Sam and Lizette have taken a front place in the Alabama English profession, they are both naturalized Alabamians. After taking an AB and MA from the University of Texas, Sam, a Arkansas native, came to Howard College as a visiting professor and liked it so much that he stayed for 36 years. Lizette came much further--geographically, that is. At the age of nine, she emigrated from her native Holland to this country, settling in New York and eventually taking degrees at Syracuse University. She, like Sam, came to Howard College, and there the two became close friends. Sam stayed on at Howard--now Samford University. Lizette, however, moved on to positions at the University of Kentucky and then to Purdue University, from which she retired a few years ago.

Sam and Lizette conducted a long distance marriage for a few years, but since Lizette's retirement they have lived happily at 1857 Southwood Road in Vestavia, an address known to many members of the ACTE. Now that Sam has retired too, they spend their time in a variety of ways. They grow African violets and cultivate their garden. They listen with equal avidness to college football and Saturday afternoon opera. They entertain guests elegantly in their homes, serving exquisite gourmet dishes. They travel often to the Gulf Coast (Lizette is addicted to salt water), and they travel to other more distant points. And, in addition to all of this, they remain busy with their professional activities. Sam serves in the distinguished position of archivist of ACTE, for example, and Lizette serves on the publications committee of *Alabama English*.

Both Sam and Lizette have distinguished themselves as teachers, and they have shared their intelligent and innovative approaches to teaching in many places. ACTE has often been the beneficiary of their wisdom.

Meet Our Editor

The editor of our new journal is Isabelle Thompson, a faculty member at Auburn University. I thought you might be interested in her qualifications.

Isabelle Thompson has been a teacher and an editor for most of her professional life. She earned her BA in English from North Carolina Wesleyan College, her MAT in Education from Duke University, her MA in English from North Carolina State University, and her EdD in English Education from Duke University. Beginning her career as a seventh-grade teacher, she later taught at a two-year technical college and at AUM before going to Auburn University to teach technical and business writing in 1982. She has worked as a technical writer and editor for industry and for the Alabama Extension Service.

Isabelle is the co-author of a college textbook, *Communication for Technicians: Reading, Writing, and Speaking on the Job* (Prentice-Hall, 1988), as well as articles in *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication, Technical Communication, Association of Business Communication Bulletin, Rhetoric Review*, and *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*. She has edited *Sunsource*--the collection of writings done by participants in the Sun Belt Writing Project--and the *Proceedings of the 1987 Gulf Coast Conference on the Teaching of Writing*.

Words of Thanks

I would like to express appreciation to the administration at Auburn University for providing a home for *Alabama English*. I would like to thank Ann Thompson, Vice President of Auburn Extension, and Bill Sauser, Associate Vice President of Auburn Extension; Jack Blackburn, Dean of the College of Education; and Mary Richards, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts. I am especially grateful to Bert Hitchcock, Head of the English Department, who not only steered us through the administrative channels but also dug into his coffers to help us get started with facilities and supplies.

ACTE and FCTE Calendars

March 13-14: ACTE Spring Meeting in Montgomery, Alabama.

October 12-14: FCTE Fall Conference in Sandestin Beach, Florida.

NCTE Council Calendar

March 16-18: Conference on College Composition and Communication Annual Convention in Seattle, Washington. Sessions and workshops for teachers of writing at two- and four-year colleges. Theme is "Empowering Students and Ourselves in Interdependent World."

April 6-8: NCTE Spring Conference on Teaching English and the Language Arts in Elementary Schools, Junior High/Middle Schools, and High Schools in Charleston, South Carolina. Theme is "One Language, Varied Voices, Many Literacies."

June 4-7: 1989 College Section Summer Institute For Teachers of Literature to Undergraduates. Sessions focus on cultural criticism.

November 17-22: NCTE 79th Annual Convention in Baltimore, Maryland.

Program to Recognize Excellence in Student Literary Magazines

Dr. David Taylor of Livingston University has been reinvited and has agreed to serve as the Alabama State Leader for the Program to Recognize Excellence in Student Literary Magazines for the next two years.

Alabama Penman Awards

The following entries won 1988 Alabama Penman Awards.

Junior Division

Poetry: "Charges," by Amy Giles, Tarrant Middle School, Tarrant, Alabama

Essay: "Playing Possum," by Candace Rose Sawyer, Monroeville Junior High School, Monroeville, Alabama

Short Story "Baby," by Shelby Kerr, Mountain Brook Junior High School, Birmingham, Alabama

Senior Division

Poetry: "Bygones," by Amy Findley, Andalusia High School, Andalusia, Alabama

Essay: "Tunnelvision," by Alexander W. Butler, Coffee High School, Florence, Alabama

Short Story "The Note," by Lisa Krupa, W. P. Davidson High School, Mobile, Alabama

NCTE Promising Young Writers

The NCTE announces winners in its third Promising Young Writers competition for eight-grade students. A total of 438 students--with six from Alabama--are being honored for their exceptional writing skills, demonstrated in samples of their best writing and in impromptu essays written under teacher supervision.

1988 Promising Young Writers from Alabama

Carl Burkart
Gresham Junior High School
Birmingham, Alabama
Teacher: Mrs. Hubbard

Milam Saxon
Gresham Junior High School
Birmingham, Alabama
Teacher: Mrs. Hubbard

Stanley Wiggins
Zora Ellis Junior High School
Talladega, Alabama
Teacher: Joyce Patterson

Barron Lee Patterson
Zora Ellis Junior High School
Talladega, Alabama
Teacher: Mrs. Anna McIlwain

Amber Hollingworth
Smith Middle School
Ozark, Alabama

Nashvia Moak
Julius Wright School
Mobile, Alabama
Teacher: Mrs. Irene McDonald

1988 Alabama Achievement Awards Winners

The following students received Achievement Awards from the NCTE.

Elizabeth Guzik
S. S. Murphy High School
Mobile, Alabama
Teacher: Elaine S. Smith

David J. Linton
Bradshaw High School
Florence, Alabama
Teacher: Nena Hargett

Emma E. Harzem
Alabama School of Arts
Birmingham, Alabama
Teacher: Charles Ghigna

Ryan P. Brown
Mountain Brook High School
Birmingham, Alabama
Teacher: Gloria W. Anderson

Eric M. Larson
Bradshaw High School
Florence, Alabama
Teacher: Nena Hargett

Dorothy E. Lee
St. Paul's Episcopal
Mobile, Alabama
Teacher: Nancy E. Strachan

"Read Alabama!"

"Read Alabama!" is a public library-based reading-discussion program created by humanities scholars and librarians in Alabama and funded by a $246,514 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The project features the work of Alabama writers in a series of four programs, each focusing on a particular author and period in Alabama's history.

Over a period of 18 months, beginning in February, "Read Alabama!" will place American and Southern literature scholars in selected libraries to lead program discussions. Not a lecture series, "Read Alabama!" is designed to encourage debate and discussion on humanities themes and issues as they are represented in Alabama's literature. Featured in the programs are Lella Warren's *Foundation Stone*, Andrew Lytle's *The Long Night*, Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and Mary Ward Brown's *Tongues of Flame*. Phillip Beidler's *The Art of Fiction in the Heart of Dixie: An Anthology of Alabama Writers* will be the core text for all four programs. The programs are free and open to the public.

"Read Alabama!" is a singular opportunity for teachers and students to discover--or rediscover, as the case may be--their literary and cultural heritage. And although works may be given "a local habitation and a name" that are decidedly Mobilian, determinedly North Alabamian, or pure Black Belt, "Read Alabama!" strives to show that Alabama's literature--its significance, impact, and theme--defies local boundaries. For more information on "Read Alabama!", contact Jay Lamar, project coordinator, Center for the Arts & Humanities, Pebble Hill, Auburn University, Alabama 36849, phone 826-4946.

Call for Proposals

Two-Year College Section
South Atlantic Modern Language Association
November 9-11, 1989
Atlanta, Georgia.

Panel discussion on the topic "Recent Reading and Writing Theory: Effective Classroom Applications."

Send one-page proposals by May 1, 1989 to:

Mark Reynolds
Jefferson Davis Junior College
P. O. Box 33
Brewton, Alabama 36427

NEH Summer Seminar

Jacksonville State University will be the host institution for a Summer Seminar for School Teachers, sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Concentrating on the best work of Richard Wright, the seminar will meet from June 26 to July 21, 1989. For further information, please write or call Robert Felgar, Department of English, Jacksonville State University, Jacksonville, Alabama 36265; phone: office (205) 231-5781 ext. 4861, home (205) 435-6164.

Fall Symposium on Literacy and Computers

The 16th Annual English Symposium at the University of Alabama, entitled "Post-Typographic Literacy: The Promise (and the Peril) of Reading, Writing, and Teaching with Computers," will take place on the Tuscaloosa campus, October 26-28, 1989. Highlights of the three-day meeting will include:

1. The screening of a PBS documentary on hypertext, "From Linking to Learning," by literary and art scholar George Landow, the director of Brown University's Institute for Research in Information and Scholarship
2. A demonstration and discussion by computer pioneer Ted Nelson
3. A discussion of current trends in technology by Stewart Brand, creator/founder of the *Whole Earth Catalogue* and author of *The Media Lab: Inventing the Future at MIT*
4. A public lecture by Pamela McCorduck, the author of two popular books on computers, *Machines Who Think* and *The Universal Machine*
5. A critique of the dangers of technology by noted educational critic Henry Giroux (Miami University), author of numerous books, including *Education Under Siege*

In addition, on Thursday morning (October 26), there will be a pre-symposium workshop for state college and junior college teachers, conducted by Peter Adams, the author of two best-selling college texts, *The Basic Grammar Workbook* and *Connections*. On Saturday afternoon (October 28), there will be a post-symposium workshop for state middle and high school teachers conducted by Helen Schwartz, the author of *Interactive Writing* and current chair of 4C's Computer Committee.

For further information, contact Myron Tuman, Symposium Director; English Department; Box 870244; Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35487-0244.

Ninth Annual SCETC Institute in Technical Communication

The ninth annual SCETC Institute in Technical Communication will be held on June 18-23 at the Hinds Community College Raymond Campus near Jackson, Mississippi. Although generally regarded as a conference for teachers of technical writing, the Institute in Technical Communication also offers topnotch instruction in the teaching of business writing and composition in general. For further information, please contact either of its co-directors:

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803-662-8151

Ann Laster
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Raymond, Mississippi 39154-0999
601-857-3361

WIT Conference

The 1989 WIT Conference will be held at Jacksonville State University on April 8. For information, contact Lisa Williams, Department of English, Jacksonville State University, Jacksonville, Alabama 36265.

National Writing Projects

Three writing projects for classroom teachers will be held in Alabama this summer. The locations are Auburn University, Troy State University, and Jacksonville State University. All sites are affiliated with the National Writing Project, which now includes some 175 sites worldwide. National Writing Project programs emphasize collaboration between colleges and public schools and promote the kinds of writing activities which lead toward an improved quality of writing and improved attitude toward learning. In 1987 the National Council of Teachers of English commended the National Writing Project as "a unique example of public school/university collaboration, a successful reform movement which fuses research and practice to improve the teaching of writing."

Each project invites some 20 outstanding classroom teachers who have been recommended by their colleagues and administrators. Each participant receives a stipend of $600, usually provided by the local system. The five-week summer institute emphasizes four major activities: frequent writing, sharing in small groups, the study of current research and theory, and the presentation of exemplary practices in the teaching of writing.

Any classroom teacher, K-12, interested in participating in one of the projects is invited to contact one of the following directors:

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The Sun Belt Writing Project
Dept. of Curriculum and Teaching
Auburn University, Alabama 36849
(205) 826-4450

Betsy Dismukes
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Troy State University
Troy, Alabama 36082
(205) 566-3000

Lisa Williams
Department of English
Jacksonville State University
Jacksonville, Alabama 36265
(205) 231-5781

Gulf Coast Conference on the Teaching of Writing

The Gulf Coast Conference on the Teaching of Writing will be held again this year at the Grand Hotel, Point Clear, Alabama, June 6-9. Keynote speakers are Peter Elbow, author of *Writing Without Teachers*; Glenda Bissex, originator of the concept of invented spelling; and Janet Emig, author of *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders* and president-elect of the National Council of Teachers of English. Each of the keynote speakers will also offer two-hour teaching workshops on Thursday afternoon.

The Conference will highlight more than 50 concurrent sessions on all aspects of the teaching of writing: writing at all grade levels, kindergarten through college; the school administrator and the writing program; correlating reading and subjects other than English; writing in Advanced Placement programs; writing in gifted programs; remedial writing, technical and business writing; using computers in the writing program; publishing in professional journals; new "right-brain" approaches to composing; and workshops in writing and editing.

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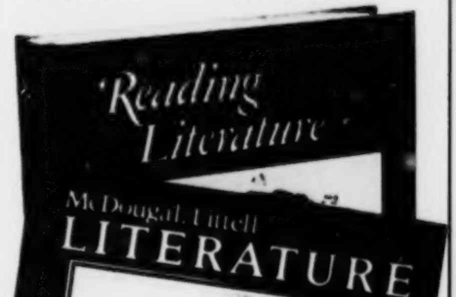

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All submissions should be typed double space. Please send three copies. If you want your manuscript returned, please enclose a self-addressed mailing envelope with postage attached by a paper clip.

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The deadline for receipt of articles to be considered for the second issue of *Alabama English* (fall 1989) is June 1.

Submit manuscripts to the following address:

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ALABAMA ENGLISH

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Editor's Introduction

Isabelle Thompson

Welcome to the second issue of *Alabama English*! I hope that this issue will help you ease from the carefree days of summer into the busy days of fall. Onward to new students, new books, new courses, old and new colleagues, and, of course, football.

This issue begins with two articles by well-known experts in the teaching of writing. The first article, "Persuasive Writing as Inquiry" by Janice Lauer, argues that by learning to use writing as inquiry, students increase their power to question their culture and their society. Writing, for Lauer, is a means for analysis and evaluation. The second article, "Tapping the Creative Potential for Writing" by Gabriele Rico, also examines the potential for discovery through writing. However, Rico uses a technique she developed—clustering—to help writers make nonlinear personal connections. While Lauer sees writing as cognitive tool, Rico sees it as an affective prod. Both researchers testify to the power of writing.

The other articles in this issue consider equally diverse aspects of writing. Lex Williford discusses how to create the "images, comparisons, and surprises" essential for writing poetry. A fiction writer himself, Williford provides not only advice about teaching writing but also a well-informed notion of the elements of good poetry. Kenneth Procter, a faculty member in Montevallo's Art Department, explains how he teaches writing to his art students. This article demonstrates that English departments are not the only, or even necessarily the best, homes for writing instruction. To follow up the article she published in our first issue, Gloria Solomon offers more proof of the language capacity that young children bring with them to school.

The second issue also introduces two new features. The first is G. E. Geiger's column on contemporary Alabama writers. In this column, Geiger focuses on two writers of books for preschoolers and a writer of pictorial histories for adolescents. In the next issue, he will consider Alabamians, such as Harper Lee, who wrote one successful novel and then retired their pens or word processors. The second new feature is a series of short essays entitled "My Professional Concern." These essays cover a range of topics, including comments about educational policy at both the national and the state level.

The next issue of *Alabama English* will be devoted to discussions of Alabama writers, past and present. Published in cooperation with "Read Alabama!" and Auburn University's Center for the Arts & Humanities, this issue will contain articles by Alabama's best literary scholars discussing artists from our state. Don't miss this issue.

In addition, I want to encourage you to send us your ideas. I hope that future issues of *Alabama English* will contain articles about teaching writing, reading, literature, study skills, listening, and all the other areas that fit under the broad categories of English and language arts. If you do not feel ready to write a full-length article, how about discussing your favorite assignment in a 1000-word (or less) teaching tip? How about explaining your views about teaching in a 250-word (or less) essay for "My Professional Concern"? *Alabama English* wants to bring your best ideas to the best teachers of the best state. But we need your help.

Finally, what do you think of our new journal so far? Do you like what you are reading? Are you able to incorporate any of the ideas here into your teaching? What changes in the journal would you like to see? Drop me a note and let me know what you want to read about.

Until spring. . . .

Persuasive Writing as Inquiry

Janice M. Lauer

Janice M. Lauer is Professor of English at Purdue University, where she directs a graduate program in Rhetoric and Composition. She is coauthor of Four Worlds of Writing *and* Composition Research: Empirical Designs. *She also directs a summer Rhetoric Seminar, Current Theories of Teaching Composition, is Chair of the College Section of NCTE, and Chair of the MLA Discussion Group on the History and Theory of Rhetoric.*

In composition textbooks, persuasive writing is commonly treated as argumentation, a task of "putting across" a thesis already in hand, of winning readers over, a conception with a long but not exclusive history (Lauer). These textbooks assume that students already possess judgments and need learn only argumentative techniques to convince readers of the righteousness of these positions. If some texts do mention reaching judgments, they still devote most of their explanation to getting the thesis across.

This essay argues for the value of persuasive writing as inquiry, as a way for writers and readers mutually to question their existing judgments, to notice anomalies among their values, cultural beliefs, and codes, and to reach new or more qualified positions as members of various public discourse communities. This kind of persuasive writing entails sophisticated powers of critique and investigation, which I will explore here, discussing views of how such writing begins, of what facilitates persuasive inquiry and critique, and finally of what obstacles confront this kind of writing.

In a quite different way from stating a thesis, persuasive writing as inquiry seems to start with writers' efforts to problematize their experience so that writing becomes an act of critical literacy. Writers try to tap into puzzlements or dissonances they experience as citizens, members of gender or ethnic groups, or participants in social and economic classes. In courses which encourage persuasive inquiry, students are helped to choose issues in their experience which baffle them because of conflicting sides, which frustrate or confuse them because of ambivalence in their own position. They are urged to avoid subjects on which they already have pat propositions and instead to tackle subjects about which they have compelling questions, not answers. They learn to confront anomalies in public attitudes, practices, and codes. These enigmas become the catalysts for persuasive writing that seeks new interpretations.

To say that persuasive writing as inquiry springs from questions, however, is to raise more questions:

- What does raising compelling questions entail?

- Why is it difficult and risky to raise such questions?
- Can we help students in this effort to problematize?
- What kinds of acts does a writer who seeks understanding about complex public issues engage in?
- What kinds of situations stimulate or block this type of writing?

A variety of scholars have been interested in how inquiry begins. Festinger describes it as starting with a felt dissonance, an inconsistency between strongly held values. Burke speaks of ambiguity as the area in which transformation takes place. Rothenberg, who has interviewed hundreds of writers, artists, and scientists about their creative processes, characterizes their beginnings as janusian thinking, a deliberate effort to hold simultaneously as true two apparently contradictory ideas, images, or theories, until they reach a new synthesis. In persuasive inquiry, such dissonances can arise from conflicts between the beliefs or terms a writer cherishes as a member of two discourse communities, for example, between attitudes as a member of an ethnic group and convictions as a citizen of a larger cultural community. If dissonance arises about an important issue for a writer, it destroys complacency and can initiate the process of inquiry.

But inquiry does not stay at the level of feeling. Investigators push beyond a sense of unease by engaging in two important acts: 1) they try to articulate the values, practices, and aspects of their experience which are clashing, and 2) they frame questions which, if answered, will resolve their puzzlement and bring them the understanding they seek. For persuasive writers, the first act engages them in a toughminded scrutiny of their cultural codes, beliefs, and values, often unexamined vestiges of their upbringing. The second act helps them to direct their inquiry because it articulates what they seek to understand. This act, posing questions, is difficult for writers, because this ability is often undeveloped. It is also the most crucial because, as Longergan points out, ultimate understanding begins with a known unknown, questions an inquirer raises, finds significant, finds possible ways to answer but cannot answer at the time. These questions contrast with an horizon—an unknown unknown—questions that are not raised because they are of no significance to the writer. These two acts—articulating elements in conflict and posing questions—are interdependent. Well-posed questions cannot be found in *Cliff Notes* or the *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*. Writers generate them from an examination of the dissonances in their own discourse communities.

If raising questions is difficult, even more challenging is the effort to posit new conjectures and interpretations. The persuasive writing being discussed here does not stop with critique, the exposure of a troubling cultural code. It seeks new meanings. Although some answers may suggest themselves immediately, these are often superficial, not satisfying. To reach complex and qualified positions on issues that affect their lives, writers need to consider alternatives, to take into account many perspectives, to confer widely. They need to interact with members of their discourse community and the sets of texts that have addressed the issue. Studies of inquiry suggest that writers increase their chances of making transformations if they withhold premature judgment and prompt themselves to symbolize alternatives. To guide their explorations, writers can use powerful persuasive modes of thinking—logos, ethos, and pathos. For example, to expose sexual exploitation in advertising, a writer can describe the distinctive and contextual features of specific ads which have influenced her views of beauty and womanhood; she can probe the agent-scene ratio of such influences; she can narrate her encounters with these ads; she can create tropes, imagining alternative conceptions of beauty. Such discursive inquiry helps her to move beyond critique to new formations, new judgments. She can contrast the goals of readers of *Seventeen* and *New Woman*, symbolizing different consequences or causes for the views of success in each group. She can spin scenarios, exposing the consequences of codes that have been uncritically held.

These discursive heuristic acts can consider ethos, examining the extent of the writer's imbrication in current cultural codes and the new adherences and behaviors that might be required or even possible as a result of critical scrutiny. Analyses of ethos are social, involving readers' attitudes and feelings toward the cultural practices and issues under scrutiny. These inquiry strategies, long-standing persuasive ways of thinking, can help writers go beyond critique to new interpretation.

Engaging in such a process of inquiry is risky for writers because they venture beyond their own entrenched judgments, seeking to articulate new meanings. Students face powerful obstacles to this kind of persuasive writing, obstacles which are important for us to help them anticipate. The first is a peculiar bent of mind that education has fostered in students. Many have been rewarded from the first grade on for knowing the right answer and for accepting existing norms. Teachers have often brushed aside as irrelevant or disruptive the questions students have raised. Education has been what Lentricchia calls a function of society to prepare the minds of the young to maintain society's principles. Students have gradually learned the "appropriate" behavior—to squelch questions as signs of weakness. They have learned how to prepare for multiple choice tests, SATs, which reward correct answers, not good questions. In many of their English classes they have been taught to begin argumentation with a thesis—an answer which they already possess. How have students gotten by with such advice? The best they could. A few good students figure out how to question through discourse, but many engage in a process of embalming, pumping enough development into a thesis to preserve it until grading time. Writing is not for them; it is for the instructor, an exercise in proof—of the thesis. This educational bias toward right answers is, then, one of the major obstacles we and our students face.

Another one is risk. Cultural critique is a fearsome undertaking. Writers become vulnerable, tackling subjects over which they do not have control but which matter to them. They face the possibility of exposing cultural practices and beliefs by which they live without reaching new judgments, new practices or attitudes. They fear the changes in their lives that new understandings may require. The riskiness of this undertaking is heightened in the English class, which represents for many students an enterprise in correct grammar, five-paragraph form, and the creation of the well-wrought urn. Students wonder whether it will be worth it after all, if the teacher ends up saying: "That is not it at all, that is not what I meant at all. You had weak transitions, three missing commas, and awkward sentence constructions."

A third obstacle for harried students is the rigorous demand of time and mental energy. Persuasive inquiry cannot be dashed off the night before a paper is due. For the student who expects a writing course to be a lightweight experience in a heavy schedule of math and physics, the intellectual and affective demands will be not only unexpected but unwelcome.

A final and serious block is that students lack coping mechanisms for this kind of writing. They find themselves off balance without their most reliable strategy—finding out and doing what the teacher wants. They are inexperienced at setting their own intellectual goals and deciding when they have been met. They are also unaccustomed to writing in public discourse communities, to using discourse beyond the literary critical community or other academic disciplines.

These are mighty obstacles, but ones worthy of a writing class and of our best efforts. How can we empower students to face these obstacles? First, as I have been discussing above, we can help students to appreciate the importance of questioning, and we can offer them strategies to guide them in raising questions and exploring alternatives with their readers. Second, we can set assignments that facilitate rather than block inquiry. If we wish students to work with issues about which they have dissonance rooted in their experience as citizens of public worlds, we might reconsider requiring everyone to write about the same subject or from a specified list. Not everyone is compelled to raise questions about capitol punishment, drug testing, rock music, divorce, pre-marital sex, or affirmative action. We might also pace assignments to allow for investigation.

Third, we can structure our classrooms as workshops in which students collaborate to examine their values and expectations about their culture, to pose questions, and to examine alternatives. Differences in points of view among students can trigger inquiry, can challenge articulations of beliefs, and can suggest lines of investigation. In these workshops, students can experience persuasion as complex and socially situated.

As Freire says, "One of the radical differences between education as a dominating and dehumanizing task and education as a humanistic and liberating task is that the former is a pure act of transference of knowledge, whereas the latter is an act of knowledge" (114). A composition class which includes persuasive writing as inquiry may be one of the few places in their education where students can gain the power to question and transform judgments about the cultural practices and beliefs in their public discourse communities.

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Tapping Creative Potential for Writing

Gabriele Rico

The guest presenter at the 1988 ACTE fall workshop, Gabriele Rico is Professor of English and Creative Arts at San Jose State University, Director of Composition, and Coordinator of the upper division writing course across the curriculum. She is author of four books, including Writing the Natural Way. *She lectures widely on the application of brain research for enhanced learning, on the creative process, and on her own invention to tap the silent right brain, clustering. A classmate of Peggy Swoger, Professor Rico is a graduate of Huntsville High School. For a recent article by Professor Rico, see "Against Formulaic Writing,"* English Journal, *February 1988.*

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What would happen if you wrote *round* on the board and asked your class to write something about it? Many teachers would get dictionary-type definitions, cliched rhymes, or fragments of stories. A few pupils might struggle to come up with even one sentence and a few might produce a fresh complete piece of writing. Would these results satisfy you? Probably not. You'd want every child to enjoy the pleasure that comes with sharing his or her own thoughts—and to enjoy writing so much that concern for quality follows naturally. Encouraging children's natural writing ability may be easier than you'd guess. What's important is understanding how to help children draw on their natural need to make patterns out of their experience, tapping the pleasure of creating their personal whole through language. Clustering is a nonlinear brainstorming technique that can get kids started. It involves a circled stimulus word, like *round*, and an open receptivity to words and phrases that come to mind. It helps writers learn to connect thoughts, feelings, ideas not connected before. It enables pupils to generate ideas, to structure them loosely, and to discover in them a tentative shape that allows writing to flow.

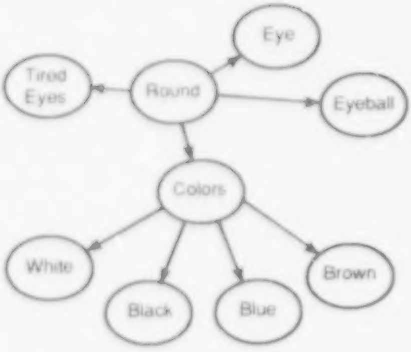
Like many teachers, I used to require my pupils to write in journals. I hoped writing in journals would stimulate the flow of ideas. But results were largely disappointing, often degenerating into mundane, diary-like entries without beginning or end, such as "I wish I were at the beach today instead of school. I'm hungry. After school I have to do chores at home, ugh. . . ." Clustering, because it taps associations that generate patterns of ideas rather than such sequential thinking, does not produce this shallow, uninteresting rattling off of events. Clustering is based on what we know from brain research. The left brain has primarily logical, linear, syntactic capabilities; the right brain has holistic, image-making, synthetic capabilities. Of overriding importance for writing is that the talents of both hemispheres be brought into play, each in its own time.

Any effective writing effort moves from a whole—no matter how vague or tenuous—to the parts, then back to a more clearly delineated whole. Clustering focuses on that initial whole by eliciting associations and metaphors from the clusterer's mental storehouse until some of them begin to shape themselves into a whole, giving the writer a sense of direction.

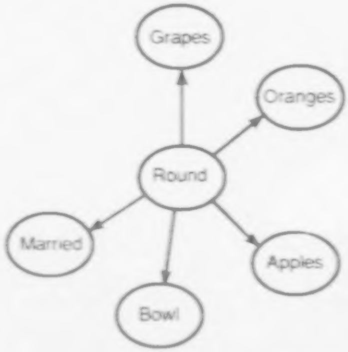
As the stimulus word echoes through the right brain, it is like a magnet, picking up images, certain feelings and emotional nuances, lines of songs or poems, similar rhythms, whatever an individual's pattern-seeking right brain perceives as related. The technique temporarily blocks the critical censorship of the analytic left brain and allows the synthesizing right brain to make flashlike, nonlinear connections. As each child clusters around a stimulus word, the encircled words rapidly radiate outward until a sudden shift takes place—a sort of "Aha!"—signaling an awareness of that tentative whole, a focus and direction that allows each child to begin writing. This moment is like watching clouds, and seeing just clouds, then suddenly seeing a horse or a duck or your neighbor's profile. It is moment of pattern recognition.

Children need to know that not everything from the cluster is used, and some things may be changed. A stimulus word filtering through a child's personal experiential sieve will always generate writing expressive of the child's unique consciousness. That is the essence of natural writing: expression unique and authentic to each child; each child's own voice heard in words written on the page.

Consider one experience I had with a group of Grade 2s and 3s given the stimulus word *round*. Every youngster wrote with a clear relationship to the concept of roundness, and each vignette was different from the others. Some thought of bicycle tires, M & Ms, and a cat curling up to go to sleep. Notice the differences in these writing samples that originally appeared in *Writing the Natural Way*:

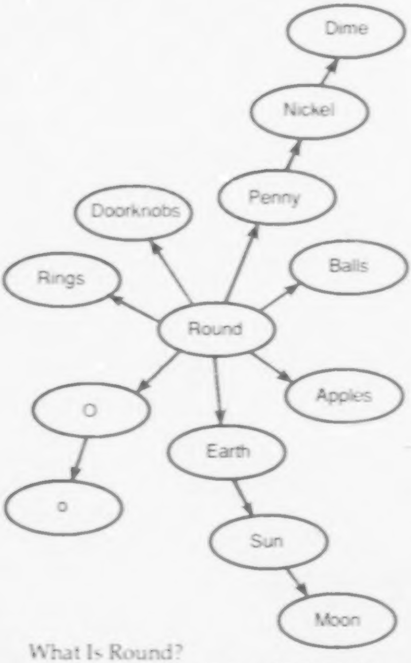


An eyeball has two circles in it. One circle is blue or brown or green. You and I know that everyone has one color in each eye, but there is also black and white. The pupil of the eye is black of course. The eyeball, not the colored part and not the pupil, is white. Sometimes your eye is bloodshot. Maybe it is because you have not had much sleep.



Once there was an apple and an orange that fell in love. But their fathers didn't let them get married.

But they wanted to so badly they even threatened to jump into a bowl of fruit and get eaten by the humans. Then they threatened to lie down in the middle of the street and get run over and they did it and that was the end of that and the two fathers jumped into a bowl of fruit and they got eaten and nobody lived happily ever after.



What Is Round?
Round is a ball bouncing high in the air.
Round is a flea that crawls up in your hair.
Round is the earth that we're now standing on.
Round is the sun that goes up at dawn.
Round is an apple that blooms in the spring.
Round is a beautiful emerald ring.
Round is a planet up in space.
Round is a necklace made out of a shoelace.
Round is the super small moon.
Round is the head of a big baboon.
Round is a log floating down the stream.
Round is a pie topped with whipped cream.
Round is a little o.
Round is a tangerine that had a friend cow.
Round is a dime, a penny, a nickel.
Round is the end of a pickle.
Round is the doorknob that sits on a door.
Round is a table that stands on the floor.
Round is a tummy of a boy.
Round is the middle of a toy.
And that's all of this round tale.
Goodbye, see ya after my bottle of ale!

The first writer produces clear expository prose for one so young. The second writer illustrates a wild prose for one so young, and the third a fine attunement to the natural rhythms of language, with the repetition of *round* as the cohesive factor. The only change I made in these samples of writing was to correct the spelling to allow children to see the power of their narratives instead of their errors.

Here are some tips for introducing cluster writing into your classroom:

1. Tell pupils that they are going to learn to use a tool that will enable them to write more easily and more powerfully, a tool similar to brainstorming. To loosen up conformist thinking, discuss how different people see different shapes in a cloud or a piece of driftwood. Explain that children have personal associations that each can capture in writing.
2. Encircle a word on the board, say, *energy*, and ask pupils, "What do you think of when you see that word? Just watch, I'm going to write whatever ideas come into my mind. I don't know what will happen." Then begin clustering yourself, writing ideas as they come to you. Flow with any

current of connections that comes to mind. Write these rapidly, each in its own circle, radiating outward from the center in any direction they want to go. Connect each new word or phrase with a line to the preceding circle. When something different strikes you, begin again at the stimulus word and radiate outward until those associations are exhausted. Don't censor yourself. The idea is to show yourself to be as open and receptive to your ideas as you'd like your pupils to be. When you finish your cluster, say something like, "See how many ideas are floating around in my head? I bet my ideas are different from each of yours, and each of yours from each other's. If you cluster by yourself, you'll have a set of connections as unique as your thumbprint."

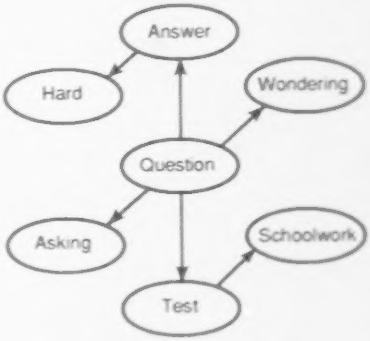
3. Ask pupils to cluster a second word for themselves. Explain that they don't have to show this paper to anyone. Try a word like *afraid* or *help*. Before the children begin, tell them that clustering should take no more than two minutes. Ask them to be sensitive to the moment when they sense a direction of what to write about. Ask them to keep clustering until the "Aha!" shift signals that their mind is holding something they can shape into a whole. Tell the children they'll write a short, self-contained vignette in 10 minutes. Ask them to choose only what seems to fit from the profusion of choices in the cluster. Say that there's no need to force every idea in. Suggest that they use what feels comfortable and ignore the rest.

As pupils write, the only constraint is that they don't leave their vignettes unfinished. Ask them to consider a whole, complete thought or statement on a subject. When they finish, pupils should reread their work and make any improvements. Ask them to give their vignettes titles.

Writers will discover—even after the first time—that clustering is easy and nonthreatening. Because a cluster draws on primary impressions, yet simultaneously on a sense of overall design, clustering actually generates structure, shaping one thought into a starburst of other thoughts, each related to the whole. Once children discover something to write about, or a least a sense of direction, they become so involved in expressing this direction that they worry less about how the parts fit together or what errors they might be making than about communicating the whole thought. That's why clustering often results in writing marked by increased coherence, fluency, and originality of images and metaphors.

Here is an example. Before clustering, one sixth grader wrote this sentence in response to the stimulus word question.

> A question is a way to find out information.
>
> Then the child tried clustering.

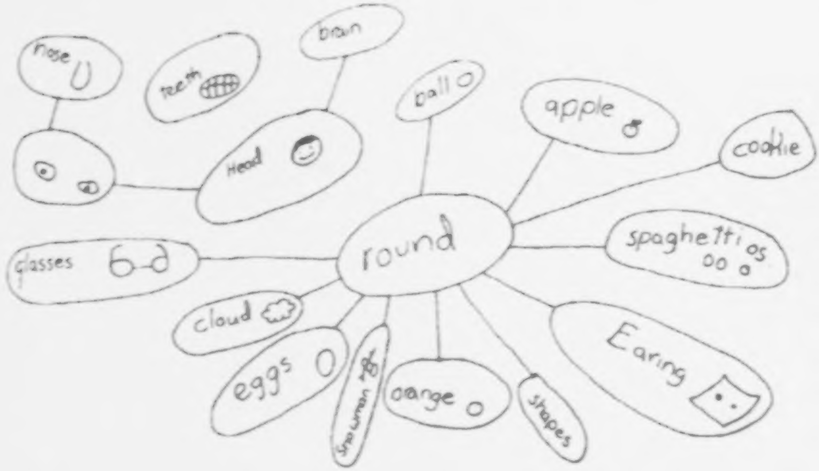


> After clustering, the child wrote this.
>
> In my world a question is a wondering. It comes upon you while you're doing schoolwork or something like that. It's an asking that you want to answer, but it isn't always easy. Then it seems to get harder and harder until you give up. You wonder about it for days, then you figure it out, but it's too late; you have already taken the test.

4. Because you want to encourage open receptivity to ideas and because children's writing is sometimes very personal, you'll want to be especially sensitive to privacy. Don't collect this first piece of writing. Instead, ask pupils to use it as their first entry in their writer's notebook. Cluster and write every day or two in the notebooks.

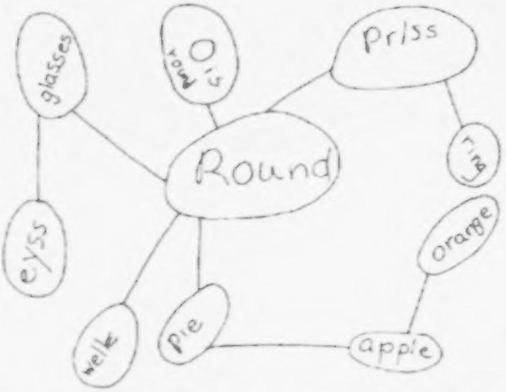
Recently, a Grade 1 teacher asked her pupils to cluster *round*, letting them know that, if they didn't know how to write a word, they could draw a picture. On the pages that follow I give you not only their original clusters but also their vignettes as they wrote them. In doing so, I emphasize three thoughts about learning and writing: 1) the children's thinking is richly imaginative at age six, 2) their connection-making ability is complex, and 3) correctness of spelling is, at this stage, secondary to the children's getting these riches on paper and feeling good about them.

Leslie's huge cluster ended up focusing on body parts, most of which possess aspects of roundness, followed by conjecture about how each part is *important*, a three-syllable word she didn't know how to spell. Because she was given permission to draw a line for words she could not spell, she managed to write a long, wondering, rather sophisticated vignette, ending with a thought about thinking.



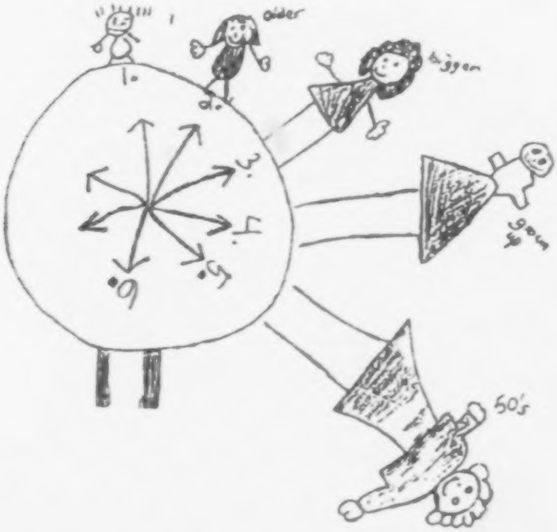
A head has eyes, nose, mouth and inside the mouth there are teeth and a tongue. The top of your head is your brain. Some people were glasses. The glasses belong on your eyes. And glasses are ver im ______ for your eyes. Your eyes sometimes need because you can't see to good. The mouth is very im ______ to because thats how you talk and eat. If you didn't have a mouth than you wouldn't be alde (able) to talk or eat. And your brain is very im ______ too so if you didn't have a brain you wouldn't be alde to think.

Leslie, Grade 1


glasses
Now
O's
Prlss
Round
ring
eyss
orange
welk
pie
apple

My eyes are round so is black berry pie that my mom makes. bubbles I blow in the bath tub there rill round! I like to eat apples and oranges I have lots of round things in my hous butens are ronud on my close. I like to have snowball fights with my sister snowbaulls are round!

Sarah, Grade 1


1
older
bigger
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
grown up
50's

Once a lifetime you live as a child and get bigger and bigger. While your getting bigger you get older. Some people think you die and another hondred you come back as something else. It's a rotatiun.

Kady, Grade 1

Sarah's vignette indicates concept learning. Since the concept is *roundness*, she describes a series of round things and elaborates about what she does with them. In her cluster, note the delightful spelling of *pearls* as "prlss." Despite the inverted spellings of "rilly" and "butens" and "close," we know exactly what she is telling us with evident relish. Look at her exclamation marks!

Kady's cluster turned into a clock with legs. Here is a six year old who in nine little lines has imagined the progression from birth to childhood through adolescence to adulthood, ending her visually clustered progression in the "50s," although her arrow designated "6.," followed by unnumbered arrows, implies an ongoing cycle. Indeed, in her vignette, she echoes this cyclical awareness of life when she asserts: "it's a rotatiun."

The knowings in children's heads are nothing short of awesome. Let us enable children to draw these knowings out—the meaning of *educare*—by giving them power over their language. Writing allows children ownership of that power if we encourage them to risk without penalizing them. Focusing on correctness before children have learned that the expression of these emerging patterns is pleasurable confuses the means with the ends of writing; we may teach them the right notes, but they miss the melody.

For the first few weeks, schedule free time after cluster writing so that no child's writing has to be interrupted. But encourage children to finish in 10 to 15 minutes. It's important for them to realize that they can finish satisfactorily within a given time.

At the end of a few weeks, ask pupils to turn in their notebooks, after stapling down those entries they prefer to keep private. The children should also select a few entries to polish for you to grade. Self-selection not only creates the assurance of privacy needed for pupils to cluster freely but also reduces your workload, allows pupils choice, and asks them to reread and judge their own work.

5. Don't emphasize the mechanics until pupils have been clustering for a couple of weeks. Discuss what fun it is to know you can write about anything. Explain that, when you've created a special piece of writing, you want to make it as good as you can by looking for improvements in spelling and punctuation. Consider asking children to read their selected vignettes to each other in groups; then work together on corrections. Children often value what they have written so much that they'll pay much more attention to mechanics. Then, mechanics become more meaningful because the writing is already valuable to the child. Don't expect the clusters themselves to be intelligible.

Psychological Benefits of Clustering

- Allows students to experience a discovery process
- Is non-threatening, enabling positive involvement in the learning process
- Honors what students already know, joining the known to the new to be learned
- Encourages the creation of patterns meaningful to students in a language that is theirs
- Creates a level of comfort that leads to writing/discussion/genuine learning
- Permits playfulness and stimulates curiosity and wonder
- Eliminates indecisiveness because a cluster breaks the ice by filling the page with associations
- Permits students to begin where they are, not where they "ought" to be

What Clustering Is

- It is a self-organizing process, allowing the clusterer to observe an emerging pattern in apparent confusion.
- It evolves into an organic thought structure from which the ensuing writing grows.
- It is a starting point for any class discussion, beginning with what students already know.
- It is an anxiety reducer, drawing, in short-hand fashion, on their knowings, opinions, feelings, images.
- It is a powerful tool for concept learning.
- It is a personal "centering" tool, allowing connections to spill out which might otherwise never emerge.
- It is a brain-compatible tool for overcoming resistance, inertia, and fear.
- It is a way of "drawing out" (educare) rather than "pounding in" (rote learning).

Clustering engenders and encourages expressive language at all ages and levels of proficiency. The more it is used, the more natural and comfortable it becomes and the more surprising the results. As pupils gain a sense of accomplishment in producing a cluster, they discover that they do have something to say after all. They also discover that writing begins to flow on its own if a sense of play is allowed to enter into the process. Such play makes contact with our natural potential for creating connections, for perceiving one idea related to another, for seeing the world whole.

My Professional Concern

Alice M. Laurendine
Vestavia High School, Vestavia Hills, Alabama

I have a genuine concern about the politics that affect education at all levels: local, state, and national. My most pressing concern, however, deals with the local level of school boards, city councils, and school systems. School board members are getting involved more and more in the administration of the schools. Therefore, the decisions that affect schools take longer and longer to make. While I do not fault specific individuals, the problem is a very real one in systems across the state of Alabama. Having served as a local board member and having worked as a principal without a board, I have had first-hand experience in seeing what keeps school systems in this state from moving forward. When educators can control their own destinies without interference from a board of education, there can be more progress in the best interests of the students, the teachers, and the community. Although board members and city councils mean well, they do not have the necessary time or knowledge to help in the ways they should. Many of their decisions are affected by political maneuvers. If we remove politics from education, perhaps we will see what can really be done to improve education.

Images, Comparisons, and Surprises: Three Terms for Teaching Students to Write Poetry

Lex Williford

A former Bread Loaf Working Scholar and Co-Director of Arkansas Poetry in the Schools, Lex Williford earned his MFA at the University of Arkansas. He now teaches at Auburn University and is editor of Caesura *magazine. His most recent stories have appeared or are forthcoming in* The Southern Review, Quarterly West, *and* Kansas Quarterly.

As a visiting writer for Arkansas Writers in the Schools (WITS) several years ago, I learned more about writing fiction by teaching fifth-grade students to write poetry than by doing just about anything I've ever done, except for taking graduate fiction writing workshops, except for sitting down and struggling to write fiction. I relearned the old lesson that one of the greatest satisfactions teachers can experience is to get back from their students more than they have given—to learn at least as much from their students as they have taught. Take this poem, written by a Farmington Elementary student, for example:

Snakes
are surprising.
They move
all over.
They hiss
like an opened coke.
They climb all over,
up your neck.

If asked why this simple but elegant poem is successful, students (or teachers) might not be able to give specific reasons beyond their subjective reactions: I liked it; it made me smile; it made me shudder; it gave me a new way to see snakes. If the Coordinator of WITS, poet and novelist James Whitehead, were asked the same question, he might say, "It allows the mystery to arise from the commonplace." If asked the same question, Gail Regier, my fellow Co-Director in WITS, might simply say, "It has images, comparisons, and surprises."

All these answers are right. The first is the most common. The second is itself mysterious and the most true. But the last is perhaps the most useful for those who teach or write or do both.

In fact, these three simple, yet interrelated terms—*images, comparisons,* and *surprises*—give teachers not only an accessible vocabulary to share with their students when they discuss poetry but also an effective way to show concretely what poetry is, how students can begin writing it, and how students can evaluate a poem's effectiveness on their own. At the very least, these terms give teachers a place to begin discussing poetry without having to confuse their students by bringing up other, more complex terms (for example, metaphor, iambic pentameter). At best, they can help make the mystery arise from the commonplace classroom.

One such incident happened to me a few years ago. After I'd taught my standard lesson about images, comparisons, and surprises to a fifth-grade class in an Ozark mountain school, I read the class Theodore Roethke's "My Papa's Waltz." Roethke's poem is about a boy's father who has returned late from a barroom fight with whiskey on his breath and blood on his "battered" knuckles. The poem's images suggest further violence at home: romping in their kitchen "until the pans / Slid from the kitchen shelf," the drunken man beats time on his son's head and dances so roughly with him that the boy gets hurt, scraping his ear against his father's beltbuckle.

At first, the teacher seemed to be put off by my reading the poem, for obvious reasons. But she seemed to change her mind after I asked for a volunteer to tell the class what the poem was about. There was a long pause, and a young tough named Jesse stood in the back row. He wore a thin Ozzy Ozbourne t-shirt and camouflaged fatigue pants, and his bigness suggested that he'd been held back a year or two.

"That poem," he said, his thumbs hooked into his pockets, "it's, like, about how this kid loves his old man."

Then for three minutes, Jesse gave an explication of the poem worthy of a graduate student (pointing out, among other things, that the poem's rhythm is like a waltz's). When I asked my usual questions, "Does it have images? Does it have comparisons?" Jesse said, "Sure thing," and deftly, confidently pointed them out. When I asked him, "Does it have any surprises?" he pointed out the main reversal, the real point of the poem's closing lines, when the father waltzes the boy "off to bed / Still clinging to" his father's shirt.

The teacher and the other students in the class turned their heads and stared at Jesse as though, till that very moment, they had never seen him before.

And as Jesse talked, two things became clear to us all: he had probably lived the lines he was describing, and he probably loved his own father, despite some unspoken pain his father had caused him. Paying close attention to the images, Jesse had understood their rightness and, more importantly, had understood what the poem is really about: a son's love for his father despite his father's casual violence.

After class the teacher came up to tell me that Jesse was a trouble-maker most of the time and that he had never said so much in her class before. She seemed stunned that he could even talk. I wasn't. In grade school and junior high, I'd been a Jesse, a kid who thought that poetry had to rhyme, that it was more about butterflies or flowers than anything close to my own experience.

That night, I saw Jesse hanging out, bored, at the Tastee Freeze. Since I was bored too (the Tastee Freeze was the only place to eat a hamburger for 30 miles) and since I knew that Jesse probably didn't have any other place to go (except maybe a home where his father would show up bloodied and drunk at 2:00 a.m.), I loaded the pinball machine with quarters and we played a few games. He shook the machine and slapped the flippers furiously, and the steel balls bounced and popped against the machine's glass. The tilt light never lit, but everything he told me suggested that he'd discovered poetry much younger than I had.

Somehow we as teachers tend to perpetuate the idea that poetry doesn't have anything to do with our students' lives. And in our discussions of poetry we often miss those students—some of them inarticulate, some of them suffering from poverty, neglect, even abuse—who have the most to say. Perhaps because we've been trained mostly in criticism, to explicate the hidden meanings in poems with an abstract language that remains inaccessible to many of our students, we've tended to give our students the notion that a good poem is abstract and incomprehensible without someone "smart" who understands the big words to tell them what it means.

What we must do when we teach students to write poetry, as John Ciardi and Miller Williams have written, is to show them not just *what* a poem means but *how* a poem means. And an important way to achieve this end is to help students do what already comes fairly naturally to them: to trust their own ways of seeing and comprehending the world.

Our first goal should be to help our students use concrete detail and images from their own lives which appeal to their own and to their audience's senses. Our second should be to help them use comparisons (metaphor, simile, analogy, symbol) which fulfill a third, more important goal: to surprise, even startle, themselves and their audience.

Surprise is the key, the means and the ends of most good poetry. It is also the best place to begin discussing many points about good poetry (and good prose, both fiction and nonfiction). These points include what cliches are, why they don't work very well, and why turning a cliche on its head can create fresh images and comparisons which evoke the startled smile of recognition; why poetry doesn't have to rhyme, especially if the rhymes become predictable, giving poems a sing-song Hallmark card quality; why the students should express themselves using their own language and voice rather than trying to impress by using flowery, literary language; why showing is better than telling; why evoking emotion is better than being emotional. Students who are told over and over again, "Surprise us," often surprise themselves, finding the reversals and revelations that make poetry relevant to their lives.

In one of his graduate fiction writing workshops, novelist William Harrison once said, "Details make emotions." Raymond Carver put it another way: "It's possible, in a poem or a short story, to write about commonplace things and objects using commonplace but precise language, and to endow those things—a chair, a window curtain, a fork, a stone, a woman's earring—with immense, even startling power" (15). T.S. Eliot's term "objective correlative" expresses the same idea: that the poetic object, the concrete image, is usually the most effective vehicle for poets to surprise their audience, to evoke their audience's emotions. (Thrall 325-26)

Students understand that poetry is usually about emotion, but too often they don't understand the difference between using abstract, emotional language in their poems and using sharp concrete detail and images to make emotion. Whenever I've asked students to be descriptive in their poems, for example, they've often relied upon adjectives that convey only their value judgments about or their emotional reactions to a subject rather than the subject itself, adjectives that tell rather than show. To illustrate how ineffective this strategy can be, I write the following poem on the board:

> I'm sad,
> I'm down,
> I'm bummed out,
> And I'm really depressed.

Fairly quickly, students understand that this poem is terribly repetitive, that the poem's descriptive adjectives don't really describe at all, and that they don't begin to evoke the emotions they are supposed to describe. (In fact, the opposite emotions are often evoked. "So what?" the students ask. "Who cares?") Even though the students call the poem boring or stupid, they can't often explain why it doesn't work—except perhaps to say, "Isn't is supposed to rhyme?"

At this point, I write another poem on the board:

I feel like
A busted-up old concrete block
Lying in the middle of a junkyard,
Next to a rusted-out radiator.

Immediately, students understand that this poem conveys all the emotions described in the first without ever mentioning a single abstraction. They understand that the things in the poems stand for and evoke the emotions—showing rather than telling us what the emotions are. Once they understand that concrete images can "hold" the emotions they wish to express, we are able to move onto other points about concrete or abstract nouns and about understatement. Understatement is one of a writer's main paradoxes: the more writers withhold their emotional reactions, the more likely they are to evoke those very reactions in their readers.

And, of course, when I ask the question, "Does it have images, comparisons, and surprises?" the students must respond, "Yes."

Obviously, however, telling students what effective poetry is does not necessarily make them write effective poetry. For this reason, to work against the three main weaknesses of ineffective poetry (abstraction, cliche, and rhyme) and to reinforce the three main strengths of effective poetry (images, comparisons, and surprises), visiting writers for WITS read and discuss poems written by students and those written by famous poets and devise and use innovative classroom routines.

Reading aloud student poems like the one cited on the first page of this article can have a tremendous effect on students, especially if the poems are newly written. Not only does it reinforce the principles of good poetry and the pleasure of listening to a poem's sounds; it also rewards risk-taking, especially for those students who may have the most trouble with spelling and grammar, those students caught in the poor writer's Catch-22, who hate writing because they can't write well and who don't take the time to write well because they hate writing. For this reason and others, I rarely point out mistakes in poems. Just as watercolor artists who slip with their brushes can make their mistakes into trees or mountains—something unexpected—students can make their mistakes into opportunities for invention and surprise. In fact, some of the more entertaining student poems I've read have arisen from unorthodox syntax or from misspelled words: "The pain of love engulped me," for example. Reading poems aloud also creates a healthy competition. No doubt about it, students enjoy hearing their words spoken aloud for the first time, and the second, and the third. But because it's easy to be overwhelmed by students who will write anything just to have it read in front of the class, I am often selective, reading only those poems which don't violate the rules we've set down as a group.

Usually, I point out the rightness of images and comparisons such as "They hiss / like an opened coke," allowing the students to talk at length about why an opened coke hisses like a snake. But mainly I point out why such a comparison is surprising, startling: when we hear the word *hiss*, we think of the cliche—hissing like a snake—but the comparison to a hissing sound we might hear every day but wouldn't immediately think of surprises us. I also discuss turns or reversals in poems, such as "They climb all over, / up your neck." We often think of snakes climbing trees, but when the poet works against our expectations and has the snake crawling up our necks, we are surprised, even disturbed, especially when the poem ends with that image.

If cliches persist in student poems—and they often do—I discuss cliches at length, mainly because many of the cliches adults have grown tired of are new to the students. On one occasion, for example, when a student wrote that his love (for a girl in the class, of course) was like a rose, I wrote Robert Burns's line, "My love is like a red red rose," on the board and used it as an opportunity to discuss, first, why this comparison is brilliant (love, the students all agreed, is often fragrant, beautiful, fragile, short-lived, and thorny) and, second, why it may not be a good idea to use such a comparison if someone has used it before, especially if the students have heard it many times. I suggested an alternative: "Love is like. . ." and I picked the first thing I saw in the classroom, a pair of bookends. It took awhile, but the students were able to concede that they had never heard of that comparison before ("It's dumb," several said, at first) and that love can, in fact, be like two bookends. "If you take one away," one student said, "the books all fall over."

Most often, I isolate examples of surprising images or comparisons that are buried in student poems. My main sources for such examples are poems written in class. But if good examples are sparse, I read from poetry anthologies which the WITS program issues annually, compiled from student poems collected on the many trips visiting writers have made all over the state. The examples below are taken from *Other Lives*, the anthology of student poems for 1986.

> The heart is like a moving face.
> Jealousy lives in a castle of diamonds.
> The desert is like gasoline—fumes
> floating across the road.
> Confused is like smelling two flowers
> at the same time.
> Blond hair is a bursting star.
> Love is like pure snow to the eyeball.
> July is a bouncing butterfly that just
> arrived.
> My sister is like a little dog biting at
> my heels.

I also give examples from the works of famous poets. For me, Elizabeth Bishop's imagist poems have continued to be the most effective. After discussing images, comparisons, and surprises, I often read Bishop's "The Fish" because many students like narrative poems (and fishing) and because they can isolate the poem's many surprising images and comparisons:

> Here and there
> its [the fish's] brown skin hung in
> strips
> like ancient wallpaper
>
> . . .
>
> I thought of the coarse white flesh
> packed in like feathers,
> the big bones and the little bones,
> the dramatic reds and blacks
> of his shiny entrails,
> and the pink swim-bladder
> like a big peony.

The more modern and contemporary poems a writer reads—from Elizabeth Bishop to Theodore Roethke, from e.e. cummings to T.S. Eliot, from Miller Williams to Mark Strand, from Robert Lowell to Phillip Larken—the better. The more straightforward and concrete the poems, the better.

One of the misconceptions I had when I first began as a visiting writer for WITS was that students wouldn't understand complex adult poems. After reading children's poems to young students for several trips, however, I realized that perhaps I was patronizing the students, even insulting their intelligence. I almost always underestimated their perceptiveness, and they almost always surprised me with their sophistication and ingenuity. Except for the very young students, grades K-4, I learned to rely on reading adult poems that would challenge the students, always trying to find the right balance: not shooting too low for the above-average students and not shooting too high for those who may have difficulty reading written language.

I also learned that, with a few imaginative leaps, teachers can adapt fifth-grade poetry writing routines for junior high or high school students.

Teachers must simply ask themselves whether the routines they are using are too childish for the groups they are teaching. For high school students, teachers may simply adapt or eliminate the game-playing routines and discuss the principles of effective poetry writing, supplying as many good examples of students' work as possible. The principles of images, comparisons, and surprises remain the same—and as difficult to execute—for students in graduate workshops and for professional writers.

For the past 15 years, visiting writers for WITS have borrowed poetry-writing routines and exercises from each other, changing them to suit their own teaching styles and interests. These writers have then codified and passed along their own routines to the next new group of writers. This article will briefly touch on two old standards—and on the routine which I've had the most success with.

The two routines that the program's visiting writers use most often, the Poetry Monster and the Word Jail, force students to avoid abstraction and reinforce their use of images in poems. Both routines are most appropriate for fairly young students, third to sixth grades. However, high school and junior high teachers may use the underlying principles of both routines to lay down the ground rules for poetry writing in their classes as well.

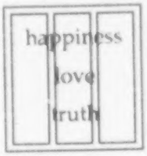
When using the Poetry Monster, the teacher draws a monster on the board whose eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and hands are hugely exaggerated to emphasize that the students must write about only those things which appeal to the monster's five senses. (Occasionally, teachers add a third eye to the monster's forehead to represent its sixth sense, its poetic vision.)

At this point, it is often useful to discuss the difference between concrete nouns and abstract nouns, encouraging the use of the former and discouraging the use of the latter. This chart, or variations generated from class discussion, can be useful:

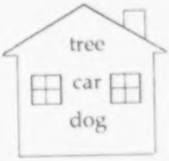
Concrete
People, places, or
things which appear
to our five senses:
sight (lightning)
sound (seagulls)
smell (coffee)
taste (licorice)
touch (canvas)

Abstract
Ideas (truth)
or emotions (love, happiness)

Those teachers who want to forbid the use of abstract nouns can use the Word Jail. Whenever a student uses an abstract noun in a poem, the teacher and class can put that student's word in jail.



Other concrete but non-specific words may go into a half-way house.



Teachers can best use these routines when they write group poems. In group poems, the entire class contributes while the teacher guides the students and writes their lines on the board. Group poems can be a good place to start, to establish and to reinforce the ground rules for writing poems. Once the students understand the principles, they can begin writing their own poems.

One of the the most consistently effective routines I've used for helping students write their own individual poems was inspired by the Rorschach or ink blot test and by similar routines in Kenneth Koch's book *Wishes, Lies, and Dreams*. Gail Regier and I spent a great deal of time drawing with Marks-a-Lots complex shapes on 5" x 7" cards. We tried to design shapes that were not immediately recognizable. Many variations on these shapes are possible, especially for older students. The standard ink blot between folded sheets of paper or abstract paintings by the students would probably be just as effective, if teachers are willing to put up with the mess. We randomly distributed these cards to our classes and asked that students look closely at the cards, turning them in any direction they wished, and immediately writing down the images they saw. After they had come up with a list of words (usually concrete nouns), we then asked the students to write their poems using all of the words in their lists. The results were sometimes bizarre and often disturbing but almost always surprising because the students were forced to use disparate images in striking juxtapositions to each other, making unexpected comparisons and subconscious connections.

These Weird Shape poems, also taken from *Other Lives*, are a few examples of those written by fifth-grade students at Dumas Middle School:

Surfing

The harpoon hits its
mark but goes through and through.
The wave loses its teeth
by biting off its tongue.
But waxing the surfboard
all over the wave's core,
inside the whale's gut,
the sails hurt like needles.

Ribwak

Echoing Ringing in vain
Like a giant meat cleaver
A two-headed two-handled hand ax
A fish calling its mate to food.

My Shape

A spiraling pterodactyl heading for
the sky,
A deformed nail being drilled.
A woodpecker making its home,
The 1999 MX Missile during World
War III
The eagle sucking up all evil.

Swimming in Could

Could is like an amusement park
With only one ride
As the mothers spoon up their kids
The teenagers are like firecrackers.

Teaching students how to write images, comparisons, and surprises has been rewarding for me both as a teacher and a writer, and even though I'm no longer a visiting writer for the WITS program, I find myself returning to the three terms again and again in many of the college classes I now teach. The poet Anne Sexton—using images, comparisons, and surprises in a poem she wrote about poetry writing, "The Beach Art"—once implied that it was possible for poets to transform their own dead wood and "old furniture" into a tree, a lasting and living thing (88). In the best of circumstances, when students understand and use these principles well, the often mysterious process of poetry writing makes effective and moving student poems possible.

Teachers interested in finding out more about the routines and exercises described in this article may inquire about Nancy Francoeur's new book *Making Poems* (which includes an extensive annotated bibliography of other helpful books on teaching poetry writing), or they may inquire about a new 30-minute documentary, *This Poem is My Poem*, by calling (501) 575-4301 or writing to:

Writers in the Schools
Department of English
333 Kimpel Hall
University of Arkansas
Fayetteville, Arkansas 72701

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My Professional Concern

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Generating enthusiasm for reading can be a Herculean task with a generation of students who respond to the siren's song of superficial visual and audio media that require little or no creative contribution from users. This problem was dramatized for me near the end of last school year when an honors student informed me quite matter-of-factly that there were no *Cliff Notes* available for the novel that I had assigned.

Realizing that our students are under great pressure with many demands on their time, perhaps we teachers contribute to the problem by focusing more on quantity than quality in our novel-length reading assignments. On the other hand, we make such assignments because we feel the responsibility of helping our students broaden their perspective and heighten their sensitivity so that they can become more fully literate.

Students should challenge themselves to think imaginatively by responding to expressive words on the page as they actively create the picture in their mind's eye. If they refuse to read the author's words, they may shut out sensory imagery that could greatly enhance their writing ability. We need to help our students reach out actively to be influenced by literary models. It is no myth that, if they become more responsive readers, our students will become more fluent writers.

Learning to Teach the Research Essay in Art History

Kenneth Procter

Kenneth Procter earned a Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. His art has been shown in solo and group exhibitions around the state and in numerous national exhibitions. He has won several juror's awards. He has also presented papers on teaching art and writing in college art classes at national and regional professional conferences.

As a member of the Art Department and a participant in the Writing Across the Curriculum program at the University of Montevallo, I am concerned with writing as a means for learning the content of my course, Art History Survey. When I first began to teach art and to make writing assignments eight years ago, I did what most new instructors do: I looked back on my own experience as a student to decide what to assign and how to clarify and sequence the assignments. In particular, my teaching has been influenced by a term paper I wrote in an eleventh-grade English class and by research essays I wrote in graduate seminars. This article will discuss what I learned about writing as a student and explain how I teach writing in my art classes.

The first large writing assignment I remember is a term paper assigned to my eleventh-grade English class. This massive project on our favorite American author stood like a great mountain in the path toward graduation. The paper was to have three sections: 10 pages of researched biography, five pages summarizing authoritative criticism, and five pages of personal criticism based on a reading of at least five of the author's books. It was assigned early in September and due on April Fools' Day. The goal of this assignment was to prepare us for writing college term papers. We felt overwhelmed. April Fools' Day was a long way off, but our teacher urged us to set up a timetable and stick to it. We quickly divided into two groups: one set to the business, worked steadily and finished up, with some kids even beating the deadline by a week or so; the second group began about the time the first finished up. Our teacher explained library research and gave each of us a 26-page booklet on the research paper (which I have to this day). We were big kids now and needed no formal checkpoints. But what was "authoritative criticism"? I never asked. I assumed that writing a term paper was an entirely private task.

Later, in undergraduate classes, I avoided courses requiring writing—especially term papers. Yet it was about this time that I wrote off for a booklet titled something like *Teaching Expository Prose;* maybe it had *crisis* in the title. It was published by some foundation or other that looked prestigious. I wasn't sure what either *expository* or *prose* meant. I don't think I ever read more than a few pages from the introduction, but that anomalous act seemed to foreshadow a later conversion. It was not until graduate school that I wrote another 20-page paper (or had anything to say worth 20 pages), and not until graduate school that I had any more memorable training in academic writing.

In a graduate seminar for painting students, the instructor, a nationally known critic and published author, assigned a five-page term paper. The assignment began with a dispute about whether art students, whose language was visual, should have to write: we did. Then the professor explained that our papers should have some "tooth." We were to get the "tooth" in them by writing titles bisected by a colon. He explained—albeit with a hint of sarcasm—that all academic papers had colons in their titles so that instead of "Matisse's *Joy of Life*," our titles would read "Matisse's *Joy of Life*: An Elegy to the Golden Age."

In another graduate class, this time an art history class, the professor assigned several short essays throughout the semester. Each was introduced by a question and due before we discussed the topic in class. When pressed to specify the length, he glared at us as if the answer were obvious: "You should begin at the beginning, proceed through the middle, and when you get to the end, stop." It was for him I wrote my second 20-page paper.

When I first assigned a short research paper to my art history students, I explained the requirements unambiguously:

1. Your title should have a colon in it.
2. Divide the paper into three sections.
3. Begin at the beginning, proceed through the middle, and when you get to the end, stop.
4. The paper is due before we discuss the topic in class.

The batch of papers was generally mediocre, seasoned with a couple of good and a few awful ones.

Feeling responsible for my students' intellectual growth, I wrote copious comments (diagonally in the margins for greater line length), circled every error, corrected phrasing, drew arrows, question marks, and wavy lines until the best of the papers glowed and the worst bled under the pressure of my red pen. With all the problems illuminated, they would be eliminated. And when the same mistakes reappeared the next semester, I distributed a code sheet explaining what the wavy lines and arrows meant. Maybe I hadn't been clear! But the code sheet only made things worse.

What was the wisdom of my three teachers, and where had I gone wrong? What was my proper responsibility to my students?

The English term paper was a neat package, a researched report complemented with a critical essay. The summary of authoritative criticism was to be the model for the personal criticism. But even having read authorities, I had only the foggiest notion of what criticism was. The benefits of imitating a model notwithstanding, for the unaided beginner to deduce the premises of criticism is a daunting challenge, and heaven knows if I found good models to look at.

An essay title with a colon is a position paper with the thesis clearly stated in the title. The art professor didn't want to read reports summarizing history and criticism; he wanted us to think. And there was no question in his mind about the necessity for a group of artists to think in words.

Challenging students to write answers to carefully phrased questions, my art history professor made essays into channels of thought, guiding us to think through each topic before we discussed it in seminar. Although each essay was brief, I wrote more pages and consequently thought through the course material more thoroughly in his course than in any prior semester. "Beginning at the beginning. . ." was the same professor's way of saying that good writing is unified organically, not by arbitrary assignment.

My English teacher balanced the kinds of writing (a report with an essay), gave us a structure, and insured in that structure that we had model ideas to work from. The art professor told us to write essays governed by a thesis and gave us a length. The art historian gave us our thesis in the form of questions, and let the length take care of itself. Could the advantages of each be combined? Could I incorporate a structured sequence of assignments and the use of models and at the same time require intellectual wrestling with material to divine a thesis under guidance to pinpoint critical issues?

A facile leap from this question to my current practice would be to recite the myth of insightfully teaching as one was taught. Numerous false starts, failures, and partial successes intervened. Training in several workshops at the University of Montevallo and elsewhere by recognized experts in the field of writing instruction enabled me to draw on the strengths of my mentors and to draw out the strengths of my students.

For my sophomore-junior level Art History Survey, Renaissance to Modern Art, a course required of all art majors, I have designed a term paper assignment. It is a term paper in that the whole term is needed to complete the sequence of six directed assignments that leads to a final research essay. The sequence guides students through the specific requirements of the essay and around the pitfalls of the particular study of a pair of Renaissance paintings.

In parts A and B, the assignment introduces an Italian and a Flemish altarpiece, similar in subject, close in date, but differing in style. In part A, students are asked to write a descriptive analysis of the Italian painting. Part B calls for a similar analysis of the Flemish work and also a comparison with the Italian painting, thus reinforcing class lectures on the general features of the two styles (See Appendix). Both parts require students to annotate a sketch or tracing of a reproduction of each work as an aid to observation and analysis. The writing begins informally (students are asked to write in the form of a personal letter) to start the process of writing quickly and easily, but at the same time focuses on essential thinking and writing skills.

I compile a summary outline of questions raised by students in parts A and B (a list of questions is required for each assignment), and these questions guide students through part C, research, and part D, forming a thesis. Part C requires students to submit documented notes in outline form that I check for accuracy (Did the student wrongly study accounts of St. John the Evangelist instead of the Baptist?) and thoroughness. Part D, requires students, in a group exercise, to analyze samples of writing by professional art historians and students. Both strong and weak examples of the latter are analyzed. In particular, students examine how thesis statements guide the argument of each essay.

Following the analysis, each student writes a draft of a thesis and a one-page abstract proposal for a paper. I review the thesis and abstract and then make recommendations for their development. Parts E, first draft, and F, revision and final draft, conclude the sequence formally with a documented academic essay. After Part E, I read and the student revises the draft according to my suggestions and (I hope) his or her own fresh insights.

The goals of the project are to foster learning and good writing by

- practicing intellectual skills such as descriptive analysis, interpretation, and research that are essential to an historical approach to the study of art

- applying concepts of history and style that are the conceptual backbone of the course (Writing demands that students practice a higher order of thinking than the memorization required for tests.)
- encouraging active inquiry, intellectual depth, and responsibility throughout a sustained project (as an antidote to the "survey skim")

Usually instruction in writing term papers treats writing as a kind of test rather than a learning instrument. The end product is explained at the outset when the students barely know what they are in for. When the papers are collected, the teacher writes a kind of critical review, which, it is hoped, will aid the student on the next such project, but which is read as the justification for the grade. The teacher makes corrections by squiggly lines and arrows (which, by the way, are better drawn with a blue pen than a red one as blue calls to mind something more akin to baptism than sacrifice). These corrections simply add to a student's frustration, inasmuch as nothing can be done about them at this point. How often have we watched students flip past our comments to the page with the grade and then stuff the paper in a notebook, as likely as not never to reopen it? Sometimes teachers read an outline proposal between the assigning and grading, but my experience has shown that commenting on student outlines is nearly useless, especially without a detour into instruction in outlining. (Little wonder: I find it difficult to imagine much beyond a skeletal outline for an essay until I have written a draft of the paper itself. Then I can write a dandy outline.)

What is missing in the scenario above is a dialogue between teacher and student about developing form and idea. Two important premises underpin such an instructional dialogue. First, apprentice writers need guidance. Second, writing and thinking are reciprocal processes: the process of writing generates ideas and clarifies thought, and conversely, since at least to some extent writing mirrors thought, the skilled and practiced thinker should produce cogent writing. Training in writing is training in thinking. Beginners need training in both.

Thus, the sequenced approach to writing has a number of advantages. The large task of the term paper is divided into manageable, focused subtasks. This manageable breakdown keeps the chronic procrastinator on track (one of my students described the assignment as an "exercise in self discipline"). But more importantly, particular skills are isolated for practice, and assignments correlate with relevant course material and objectives. For beginners, expanding the project into discrete steps permits the active guidance of the teacher at each stage of progress and fosters the fullest "digestion" of the analysis, interpretation, and research students have carried out. With this sequenced instruction, my students produce more thoughtful and cogent writing than before; they submit essays rather than reports.

In conclusion, although the sequenced assignment presented here is, at best, only a schematic model of the thinking, research, and writing process, expanding the assignment into discrete steps permits active guidance and fosters the fullest "digestion" of the analysis, interpretation, and research. Students are encouraged to question, consider, speculate, rethink, write, and rewrite. All these intellectual activities consciously or unconsciously contribute to cogent thinking and, paraphrasing Thoreau, to ideas that lie like boulders on the page. Instead of raising mountains in the paths of students, we might offer structure and an avenue for growth: for most apprentices, it is guided writing and rewriting that result in good writing. This, then, is the proper responsibility of the teacher assigning writing: teach at the beginning, continue teaching throughout the process of writing and rewriting, and when you teach at the end, use a blue pen.

Suggested Readings

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Writing Across the Curriculum: More Support

This comment by Barry Kyrklund, an eighth-grade science teacher, was published in *Newsletter for Mountain Brook's Language Arts Teachers* (May 1989):

> This time last year, I never would have believed that I would be using writing as a vehicle to improve learning in science. But here I am today using journals. Basically, what I do is allow students (it's a privilege not a requirement) the opportunity to write in their journals about twice a week. They may write anything they wish as long as they do so from memory. The big advantage for the students is that they are allowed to use their journals on tests. WOW—an official cheat sheet in notebook form! Many of my students made comments such as 'Once I have written information in my journal, I really know it; in fact, I rarely use it on tests for this reason.' Journal writing has also allowed me to get to know students in a more personal way. Some students who are quiet and withdrawn in class talk with me through their journal writing. These are students that I can get to know who would have otherwise remained faces in the crowd. Journal writing is by no means always serious. Students tell me the latest Auburn-Alabama jokes, who their current boyfriend or girlfriend is, or even what movie they have seen lately. I've also begun a personal journal and have noticed a dramatic improvement in my own writing ability. It has helped me to clarify my thoughts and feelings which before remained so much mumbo-jumbo in my mind. Journal writing may not be for everybody, but I'm sold.

Appendix: Excerpt from Assignment

Art 219

Writing Project Part B: Comparative Descriptive Analysis

25 points Due Date:

The Situation:

You are an Italian merchant in Flanders on business. Familiar with the work of artists in your native Florence, you are curious about the style of painting in this northern land. Your acquaintance, Giovanni Arnolfini, shows you his wedding portrait done years before and directs you to another well-known painting by Jan van Eyck, *The Virgin with the Canon van der Paele*. It is a beautiful work and immediately reminds you of a painting by your friend, Domenico Veneziano, recently completed and much acclaimed. Although the paintings have a similar theme, van Eyck's is exotic, "northern," in style. You resolve to describe the painting to Domenico, analyzing its subject and form, making comparisons to his own work. To aid your analysis and to make your points clear, you sketch the painting and include it with your letter.

The Subjects:

The Virgin with the Canon van der Paele, f. 18-12, p. 591, and *The St. Lucy Altarpiece*, f. 16-33, p. 499, in *Gardner's Art Through the Ages*. See also Lassiagne's *Flemish Painting* and Musper's *Netherlandish Painting from van Eyck to Bosch* for details of the van Eyck work. (Both books are on reserve in the library.)

References:

Barnet, *A Short Guide to Writing About Art*, chapters 2 and 3, on analysis and comparison. Review reference suggestions for Part A.

Form:

1. Short (four pages or so) neatly typed or handwritten. Describe and react to the van Eyck; analyze its subject and form. Some comparison with Domenico's painting is expected. An interpretation is encouraged, but this is not chiefly an interpretative paper.
2. Include a sketch of the painting. This is easiest with tracing paper. Use the sketch to aid in your analysis; make appropriate notations.
3. List the questions you have about the painting—anything that would help you understand it better. Attempt to answer your questions. Attach this list to your paper.
4. Staple the pages together in the upper left corner. No need for folders.

Evaluation:

Part B is worth 25 points. The instructor will read and comment on your paper. Points will be awarded according to the quality of your work. (See evaluation criteria in the syllabus.)

The Tale of the Snake

Gloria Solomon

Gloria Solomon is principal of Hewitt Elementary School, a K-4 school of 1200 students in Jefferson County. Before moving to Hewitt Elementary School in 1986, she was principal at Hillview Elementary School, a K-6 school. She has published in Kappa Delta Pi's The Record, Principal, Wingspan, North Central Association Quarterly, Alabama Reader, Principals' Center Newsletter: Harvard Graduate School of Education, *and the first issue of* Alabama English.

After returning from Columbia University's Summer Institute on The Teaching of Writing, I wanted to test what I learned about children's abilities to critique each other's writing. I really had my doubts whether children in the elementary grades could evaluate writing, regardless of what Professor Lucy Calkins believed. Certainly children cannot learn to critique without direct instruction, I thought.

When I introduced the notion that writing is best approached in terms of its process rather than its final product to the sixth grade at the Hillview School, I devised a sneaky little test to check the children's critiquing skills. I came into their classroom one day and told the children that I had written a story about an unusual experience I had just had. Here is the story, called "Saturday Was No Vacation," as I read it to them:

Saturday morning I woke up at 8:30. First, I brushed my teeth. Then I took a shower. Next, I had orange juice, a vitamin pill, and cereal. Then I drove to school to do some work. I walked into my office, turned on the lights and air conditioner. As I walked out of the office, there on the floor next to my desk, lying in the sun, was a snake. Boy, was I shocked!

"Well, what do you think of that story?" I asked, and every hand in the class shot up.

"You didn't tell us what you did or what the snake did."

"You didn't tell us what kind of snake it was, or what it looked like."

"Well, uh, it was kind of . . . boring. You said, first I did this and then I did that, and then I did that."

I thanked them all and promised to revise my story and bring it back. Here is what I read to them a few days later:

Driving to school last Saturday morning I was so preoccupied with thoughts of all the work I planned to get out of the way that I arrived in 25 minutes instead of the usual 30. I walked into my office, turned on the lights and air conditioner and, while sitting at my desk, neatly stacked my papers in order of needed priority.

Now to the typewriter, I thought as I walked around the corner of the desk. On the way to the typewriter in the outer office, *I glanced down to a sunny spot on the floor in front of my desk. Suddenly, my eyes became glued to a brown and black spiral object that almost blended in with the brown tweed carpet. Trying to get a clearer view, I bent down and squinted my eyes to convince myself that the object was just an extension cord that had fallen off of the desk, but in the flash of a second, my worst fears were confirmed. Sunning itself in the middle of my office was a snake coiled in three loops with its tongue darting slowly back and forth.*

My knees suddenly felt as if they wouldn't hold me up. I had a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach, and I felt lightheaded. What to do, I thought. Maybe the custodian had left a shovel in her broom closet. I could squash it with a shovel. I ran down the hall to the broom closet, trusting the snake would stay motionless until I returned. When I opened the closet door, my heart sank. No shovel, no broom. The only thing in the closet that might possibly help me was a mop handle. Grabbing the mop handle, I rushed back into the office, relieved to see that the brownish black snake had not moved an inch, although its tongue was still darting back and forth.

Holding my breath and gathering my courage, I lunged toward the dreaded creature in the middle of the sunspot on my carpet, missing the target completely. Before I realized what was happening, the skinny reptile, no wider than a ruler, stretched out to its full four feet and slithered toward me, as I stood horrified in front of the bookcase in the entryway to my office. As if changing its mind, it switched direction slightly and started to move under the bookcase. Feeling absolutely helpless about capturing it, yet wanting at least to contain it where I knew, with some help, we could get rid of it later, I slammed the office door.

My mind clicked like a Morse code radio operated at high speed as it went through the possible list of people I could call for help. Mrs. Callicott, our custodian, I thought with relief as I dialed her number, praying she would be home. My prayers were quickly answered as I heard her sympathetic voice saying "Dr. Solomon, I'll be there in just a few minutes." While I was waiting, I sat on a high stool several feet from my closed office, watching under the door to make sure the snake didn't decide to slither out of the narrow space between the floor and the end of the door.

Within five minutes that felt more like 25, I heard the front door of the school open and saw Mrs. Callicott followed by a man carrying a hoe. Both of them smiled at me as they rushed past my stool, seeming anxious to catch the trespasser before it got away. I could see part of the "goings on" from my perch on the stool. I could see Mrs. Callicott moving one end of the bookcase. I could see her point, then step back one or two steps and put her hand on her cheek as she chuckled nervously.

In less than a minute, Mr. Tanner, her neighbor, stepped past Mrs. Callicott, victoriously carrying the snake's body on his hoe. He told me it was "only" a chicken snake, a nonpoisonous species, but the panic I felt could hardly have been greater if it had been a python instead.

I asked for written comments and here are some of them:

"I like the adjectives you used."

"The story was very exciting this time. You used more adjectives, adverbs, nouns, and pronouns."

"I thought it was good because you gave a lot of action."

"I have no comments because it was good."

"I like the part where you told about how you got rid of the snake, but where did it go?"

"I loved it because it was a whole lot more descriptive than the last one."

"I was esent (exciting)."

I didn't get rave reviews from all the sixth-grade critics. At least one of them thought my revision needed more work.

"You had too many discribing (describing) words," the student wrote. "Like if you ever read it to a younger child they might not understand some of the words."

If I have learned anything through my experiences working with youngsters in grades K-6, it is that we badly underestimate what children can do without our direct teaching. We believe that children know less than they do because we rarely give them a chance to show their knowledge. Therefore, we waste a lot of class time teaching students what they already know.

My Professional Concern

Minnie M. West
Girard Middle School, Dothan, Alabama

My current professional concern is the lack of motivation on the part of students, teachers, parents, and the general public toward the education of America's students. The excitement for teaching and the love for learning have almost vanished. Where is the concerned parent? Where is the child who is excited about learning? Where is that teacher who can put fire into the hearts of our young people? Where? Where?

Jeri Holcomb
Boaz, Alabama

Why will we pay over $50 for a pair of tennis shoes but complain about paying $20 for a book? Why will we drive hundreds of miles in all types of weather, fight crowds, stand in line, and pay to sit on hard bleachers to watch a sporting event but will not drive ten minutes to attend a free concert or lecture? (When we do attend, we watch the clock and/or expect free refreshments.) Do we really want an education? Do we truly want to be literate? Our actions often say we don't. Unfortunately, I must say *our* actions, for too many times I am a part of the problem. I have come to expect FREE education and $75 tennis shoes. I want to attend the sporting events and resent it when homework—either mine, my husband's or my children's—interferes. I see a definite problem with determining priorities here. Until we find a way or ways to redefine and *believe* what is important, these problems will continue. It is education that builds the solid foundation we can stand on—not the rubber that cushions the soles of our feet.

My Professional Concern

Martha Wall
formerly of Thompson High School, Homewood, Alabama

Perhaps you have attended church and heard a sermon on the importance of attending corporate worship. Ironically, those who are there do not need to hear such a lesson.

For this I apologize.

Why do teachers not feel and act like they are professionals? Do we reflect the public view: if you can't do anything else, you can teach? Are we reacting to the fact that an athlete is worth seven or eight million dollars per year compared to our twenty thousand or so? Well, as we all know, our culture's priorities in many areas could stand an overhaul. Many teachers view teaching as a job, not a profession; they see it as a task, chore, position, an eight to three stint. At the risk of seeming sentimental, I would suggest that we remember that we embrace the most important profession in the world. After all, we mold and make futures during that seven-hour stint. Every day, a child places his or her tenuous inchoate ideas in our hands. Isn't this far more important than a job? A professional is defined as someone who belongs to one of the learned or skilled professions, a rubric that includes education. The fact that the word is derived from the Latin "to profess" entails a continuing declaration of belief, an obligation not only to ourselves, but to the people who are likely to emulate us. And in professing, we have to keep in touch with the PROFESSION by the increment of knowledge in every way available.

Perhaps we shun the word *professional* because it sounds stodgy. We call up a mental image of fossilized old teachers whose only life is the classroom, forgetting that some of the liveliest people in the world are educators who take their "positions" very seriously, while enjoying the frolics that life provides. Perhaps we shun the word *professional* because we're afraid that we might need to change some of our peacefully structured classroom procedures or ideas. Professionalism does, of course, imply change, growth, perpetual momentum. Like doctors who must accept changes in medicine and critical procedures, we have to remember that we daily profess. We should avoid letting common sense get trampled under the power of traditional rigidity.

To profess adequately an educator should want to broaden horizons by reading journals, taking courses, attending cultural activities and workshops, and embracing scholastic adventures wherever they may be found.

A concern is something that troubles us or that makes us anxious. With so many of our teachers uniting to missionary professionalism, I am really not troubled. Perhaps I am just anxious for all teachers to join the very satisfying, very motivating professional ranks.

Marmalade, Big Fat Worm, Rainbow Crow, and World War II

G. E. Geiger

G. E. Geiger is Special Collections Librarian at Auburn University, where he gathers and displays books and manuscripts of all kinds written by Alabamians. Employed by Auburn for more than 25 years, he has held his current position since 1979. Geiger became interested in Alabama writers when he acted as a judge on a statewide committee to select Outstanding Author of the Year in 1983. Even though Geiger is very fond of Marmalade, he is not a cat fancier. His pets are always dogs, the most recent of which is a seventeen-year-old poodle.

We have invited Geiger to write a regular feature article sharing his knowledge of Alabama writers. His first article discusses two writers of books for preschoolers, Cindy Wheeler and Nancy Van Laan, and a writer of pictorial histories of World War II, G. C. Skipper.

Wheeler's tales of Marmalade the Cat

Cats! Since the time of the pharaohs, cats have been a source of fascination. The cat has never been regarded with indifference; it has been considered either sacred or demonic. Bast, the popular Egyptian goddess of pleasure, was represented by a cat's head. Diana, in Roman mythology, could assume the form of a cat. There are other examples of the cat in mythology, but the cat I am interested in is an ordinary cat which is very lovable. Its name is Marmalade.

Marmalade is the creation of Cindy Wheeler, an Auburn University graduate. Since 1980, Wheeler has been delighting preschoolers with the various adventures of Marmalade. In the six books featuring the name "Marmalade" in the title, readers can find the cat (no gender) playing with a yellow leaf, romping in the snow, taking a nap, getting its nose out of joint over a Christmas gift, or gaining its revenge for not being invited on a picnic. In her latest book, Wheeler introduces a new human character, Sally, based on Wheeler's three-year-old daughter. Sally is a playmate for Marmalade. With the introduction of this new character, Wheeler should be able to continue entertaining preschoolers for many years to come.

Besides the Marmalade books, Wheeler has written a book about a pig named Rose in search of a cool spot on a hot summer's day and three other books. She has also illustrated books written by others. Born in Montgomery, Wheeler currently resides in North Carolina, where she maintains a studio.

Books for Preschoolers by Cindy Wheeler

A Good Day, A Good Night. New York: Lippincott, 1980.

Marmalade's Christmas Present. New York: Knopf, 1984.

Marmalade's Nap. New York: Knopf, 1982.

Marmalade's Picnic. New York: Knopf, 1983.

Marmalade's Snowy Day. New York: Knopf, 1982.

Marmalade's Yellow Leaf. New York: Knopf, 1982.

A New House for Little Mouse. New York: Random, 1987.

Rose. New York: Knopf, 1985.

Sally Wants to Help. New York: Random, 1988.

The Scaredy Cats and the Haunted House. New York: Random, 1982.

Books Illustrated by Cindy Wheeler

Marron, Carol A. *Someone Just Like Me*. Milwaukee: Raintree, 1983.

Schertle, Alice. *That Olive!* New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1981.

Talanda, Susan. *Dad Told Me Not To*. Milwaukee: Raintree, 1983.

Zolotow, Charlotte. *One Step, Two. . .* New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1981.

Van Laan's Stories about the Big Fat Worm and the Rainbow Crow

"I'm going to eat you up," said the big fat bird. Thus starts the intriguing tale of the big fat worm. The big fat bird's plans are thwarted by the big fat cat, which has its own ideas about the bird. Alas, the cat does not have its way because of the big fat dog. And, the dog must be satisfied by digging up an old bone. The story of the big fat worm is designed to give preschoolers free rein with their imaginations and allow them to develop many different solutions to conclude the tale.

The Big Fat Worm is the first published work of Nancy Van Laan, a former Birmingham resident now living in Pennsylvania. She is a graduate of Shade Valley High School and University of Alabama. Van Laan's second book, *Rainbow Crow*, was released last April. In this tale, a bird is not the villain, but the hero. During the winter, with its constant weather changes and the ever-falling snow threatening to engulf all the animals, it is the crow that flies up to receive the gift of fire from the Great Sky Spirit. Based on Indian legend, the book is excellent, especially its illustrations, its information about Indians and the importance of fire, and it emphasis on folklore.

Books for Preschoolers by Nancy Van Laan

The Big Fat Worm. New York: Knopf, 1987.

Rainbow Crow. New York: Knopf, 1989.

Other Books for Preschoolers

Have you ever used a polar bear as an excuse for being tardy for school? What about celebrating Christmas in the desert, using a cactus for a tree? Have you seen a Halloween ghost or watched a shooting star? These are just a few samples of what other Alabama writers have to offer preschoolers.

Boyd, Selma, and Pauline Boyd. *I Met a Polar Bear*. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1988.

---. *Footprints In The Refrigerator*. New York: F. Watts, 1982.

Daughtry, Duanne. *What's Inside?* New York: Knopf, 1984.

Glendinning, Sally. *Jimmy and Joe Fly a Kite*. Champaign, IL: Garrard, 1970.

---. *Jimmy and Joe See a Monster*. Champaign, IL: Garrard, 1972.

---. *Jimmy and Joe Go to the Fair*. Champaign, IL: Garrard, 1971.

---. *Jimmy and Joe Meet a Halloween Witch*. Champaign, IL: Garrard, 1971.

Jackson, Caroline. *Dawn Daring*. Arlington: Belvedere, 1982.

Maddox, Hugh. *Billy Boll Weevil: A Pest Becomes a Hero*. Huntsville: Strode, 1976.

Snow, Dorothea. *Walt Disney's Donald Duck On Tom Sawyer's Island*. Racino, WS: Golden, 1960.

Stoddard, Sandol. *Bedtime for Bear*. Boston: Houghton, 1985.

---. (Sandol Stoddard Warbung) *I Like You*. Boston: Houghton, 1965.

Stubblefield, Eunice, and Annette Tucker. *In The Desert One Christmas Eve*. N. P., n. d.

Skipper's Pictorial Histories of World War II

G. C. Skipper was born in Ozark in 1939. A graduate of University of Alabama, Skipper was once a reporter for the *Huntsville Times*. His earliest work is a novel for adult readers, *And The Angels Raged*. Later, in the 1970s, he wrote three juvenile mysteries. However, the bulk of his work is a series of pictorial histories intended for readers from grades three through eight. In this series of almost two dozen works, Skipper has presented the events, battles, invasions, and personalities of World War II. Each book is well illustrated with either drawings or photographs showing both the European and the Pacific theaters of operations.

Pictorial Histories by G. C. Skipper

Battle of Britain. Chicago: Childrens, 1980.

Battle of Leyte Gulf. Chicago: Childrens, 1981.

Battle of Midway. Chicago: Childrens, 1980.

Battle of Stalingrad. Chicago: Childrens, 1981.

Battle of the Atlantic. Chicago: Childrens, 1981.

Battle of the Coral Sea. Chicago: Childrens, 1981.

D-Day: The Normandy Invasion. Chicago: Childrens, 1981.

The Death of Hitler. Chicago: Childrens, 1980.

The Fall of the Fox, Rommel. Chicago: Childrens, 1980.

Goering and the Luft Waffe. Chicago: Childrens, 1980.

Invasion of Poland. Chicago: Childrens, 1983.

Invasion of Sicily. Chicago: Childrens, 1981.

MacArthur and the Philippines. Chicago: Childrens, 1982.

Mussolini: A Dictator Dies. Chicago: Childrens, 1981.

Pearl Harbor. Chicago: Childrens, 1983.

Submarines in the Pacific. Chicago: Childrens, 1980.

Other Books by G. C. Skipper

The Ghost in the Church. Chicago: Childrens, 1976.

The Ghosts at Manor House. Chicago: Childrens, 1978.

The Night in the Attic. Chicago: Childrens, 1976.

Coming Spring 1990. . . .

Alabama English will publish a special issue on Alabama writers. Working in cooperation with the Auburn University Center for Arts and Humanities and "Read Alabama!", we will consider past and present literary works written by and about Alabamians. This special issue will feature writers and works that have received national and international critical acclaim but are often not well known in their home state.

Among the topics addressed will be Mary Ward Brown's Hemingway Award winning collection of short stories, *Tongues of Flame*; Lella Warren's *Foundation Stone*, a novel about a family's struggle to settle the Alabama frontier; the works of Mobile native William March, perhaps best known as the author of *The Bad Seed*; and T. S. Stribling's Pulitzer Prize winning *The Store*, the first in a trilogy of novels set in North Alabama.

Brief reviews of such works as George Wylie Henderson's *Ollie Miss*, a lyric novel set in Macon County, Alabama, and Mark Childress's *A World Made of Fire* will also be featured. Watch for this issue in Spring 1990.

My Professional Concern

Teresa B. Kelly
Westside Middle School, Selma, Alabama

My main concern in my profession is that parents pay too much attention to their child's grade and too little to the amount of knowledge their child receives. Although most parents see their child's grade as a reflection of what is learned, some parents are only interested in a "pretty" grade for their child. These parents should be educated in the correct placement of emphasis. Instead of placing so much emphasis on grades, they should find out areas of weaknesses in their child. By working with the teacher to correct deficiencies and strengthen areas of weakness, parents can help their child learn. An improved grade will be the reward of this learning.

Peggy Swoger
ACTE Vice-President

One of my professional concerns is the lack of an organized effort on the part of English teachers to influence our legislature and state department on matters of great importance in educating children. Specifically, we should have an impact not only on curriculum and instruction of English language arts, but on reducing class size and reducing the influence of standardized testing. We could use many strong voices to build support for the teaching of English in Alabama. It's an important responsibility of every member of the English teaching profession. SLATE (Support for the Learning and Teaching of English), NCTE's volunteer action wing, provides the organizational structure in many states to do what we need to do in Alabama. Let's organize SLATE in Alabama!

James Barfoot
Auburn University at Montgomery, Montgomery, Alabama

I struggle with what kind of person I am in the classroom. A few friends of mine have brought the specter of the patriarch as teacher before me, and I have seen the negative impact that specter has on my notions of power and influence over my students, their work, and their lives. I have taken on a burden that I need not have taken on for a very long time and ironically that burden has placed a burden on my students. I have expected a response from them that has been rather narrow and related to my role as the patriarch. When that response has not been forthcoming, I have had a very limited, unimaginative range of alternative emotions and ideas with which to work. What I once thought a professor or a teacher to be is now in grave doubt. The foundation of who I am as an instructor is having to be set again. This makes me very tired and very excited.

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Year of the Young Reader

Submitted by Evelyn Blake
Valley Elementary School, Pelham, Alabama

Certainly every teacher of English from kindergarten to college recognizes the importance of fostering a love of reading and incorporating literature into classroom discussion. This year English and language arts teachers have been joined by other groups to promote reading. Congress has proclaimed 1989 "Year of the Young Reader," and a statewide group of educators and parents, the Alabama Reading Incentive Council, has been formed. The goal is to insure that appropriate books for young readers are available and that students are given adequate time for reading. Martha Folsom, wife of Lt. Governor James E. Folsom, is the Alabama spokeswoman for "Year of the Young Reader" and honorary chair for the Alabama Reading Incentive Council. She stresses the importance of the role of teachers by quoting the author Jim Trelease in his introduction to *Once Upon a Time*:

> There is a hopefulness in the minds of those who write and illustrate books. They create their books with the trust there will be someone—a parent or a teacher, a librarian, even an older sibling—someone who will act as an intermediary between the author and the child. After all, people are never born wanting to read, any more than they are born wanting to play baseball or the piano. So count among the needs of the world those special people who help children discover the meaning behind those strange marks that add up to an alphabet, who thankfully let children know there is more to reading than workbook pages.

Here are some suggested ways to celebrate "Year of the Young Reader":

1. Have a "reading reunion" using books about or by famous Alabamians. Prepare state maps and place stars at the appropriate spots where the Alabama authors live or lived.
2. Hold a "Battle of the Books" competition between schools in the district. Have students read specified books and be prepared to answer questions. Begin questions with "In what book . . . ." (See *School Library Journal*, January 1988: 41.)
3. Purchase interactive fiction software, which lets students take story elements and arrange them differently to develop their own stories. Have story sharing sessions so students can compare how they developed the story line. Interactive fiction software is available from numerous vendors. Examples are *Dragonworld* and *Amazon* by Telarium, *The Mist* by Mindscape, *Borrowed Time* by Activism, *Moonmist* and *Witness* by Infocom.

4. Begin a "Reading is Fundamental" (RIF) program by eliciting the support of a civic group. RIF is a nationwide non-profit organization that promotes projects to provide books for children to encourage them to read. Contact RIF, Smithsonian Institution, Suite 500, 600 Maryland Avenue, S. W., Washington, DC 20560, or call 202-287-3220.

5. Hold a Read In/Sleep Over for students to read and share a given number of books. Ask parents to help with preparing and supervising the event. Plan various storytelling, arts and crafts, and audiovisual activities to take place during the evening.

6. Start a "Birthday Club" so parents can give a book to the library in honor of their son's or daughter's birthday. Place a book plate in the selected book and let the honoree be the first to check it out. Hold a birthday celebration complete with decorations and singing in the library media center.

7. Ask outstanding members of the community, such as local politicians, to read favorite stories or book segments during the lunch hour.

8. Ask students to design book jackets for books with worn or drab covers. For each title, the student should read the book and design an appropriate book jacket. Laminate the covers and affix them to the books. Let students choose their favorites.

9. Participate in the "Emphasis on Reading" program, in which students read and then vote on their favorite title. This statewide program has book lists for grades K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12. To get a copy of the list for your grade, contact Martha Philippoff, Cheaha Regional Library, P. O. Box 308, Anniston, Alabama 36202. (See the article that follows for more information.)

10. Have a schoolwide DEAR (Drop Everything and Read) Week in which everyone in the school reads a book during a specified 15-minute period each day.

11. Videotape students reading aloud and operate a lending library for home viewing. Make copies for parents who send a blank tape.

12. Use the morning announcements time to promote a "book for the day." Describe the book in four or five sentences.

13. Compile a list of favorite books of outstanding citizens in the community. Duplicate the list and let students check the ones they have read.

14. Celebrate a "Pig Out on Books" week. Decorate the media center with all types of pigs—paper, china, stuffed toys. Have a trivia contest to see which person can answer the most questions about pigs in literature. Create the Three Little Pigs' house out of poster board and let students place slips of paper with the names of books they have read inside the house. See if the students can fill up the house.

15. Let students make bookmarks to indicate their favorite books. Laminate the bookmarks and use them to decorate Christmas trees in the media center. Punch a hole in one end of each bookmark and tie it on a tree using red or green yarn.

16. Hold an International Fair using books that are set in other lands. Let students dress in costumes that correlate with each book. Write to embassies for materials to use in decorating the library media center. Have a group of students make a bulletin board-sized globe

and put miniature books in the appropriate countries.

17. Reward students who read and share books with "book dollars." At the end of the month, let students use their dollars to bid in the paperback auction.
18. Organize a parents book club that meets at night to review and share children's and young adults' books. Ask the parents book club to prepare bibliographies and give book talks.
19. Hold a poster contest for students to illustrate their favorite book and display the posters in local businesses.
20. Put a long strip of butcher paper on the wall in the main hall and encourage students to write a brief recommendation for a good book.

If you have not yet planned a special event for your children or your school to observe "Year of the Young Reader," it is not too late. It behooves us to seize the opportunity provided by this national focus and add a fresh approach in promoting the love of reading.

Send information about plans to celebrate "Year of the Young Reader" to Warren Mitchell or Jane Bandy Smith, 111 Coliseum Blvd, Montgomery, Alabama 36193. The goal is for every school in Alabama to have at least one special project during this special year.

My Professional Concern

Charles Hannah
Opelika High School, Opelika, Alabama

Possibly because of the date of this writing—after closing units on Greek philosophers and on *Julius Caesar* with tenth graders—I am concerned with our ignorance—my own and my students'—of classical literature. I don't want a list of 200 facts we should be able to identify; and I know that a strictly classical canon is biased toward a particular sex, race, and region. However, while we create new literature, I wish we were more firmly rooted in ideas from the past—even if these ideas are used as negative examples. I feel that I'm searching in the dark since my background does not include much of this material. I can only echo my students' question, "Why haven't we heard of this before?"

My Professional Concern

Where Have All the Readers Gone?
(Literacy Inside and Outside the Schools)

Irene B. McDonald
United Methodist Church School, Mobile, Alabama

In her talk at the 1989 Gulf Coast Conference on the Teaching of Writing, Janet Emig explained that she reads to offset the limitations of having only one life to live. Reading gave her a new set of parents, for example, and the ability to "leave myself" and return at will.

A main concern of mine is that so few of my students have this reader's option because they rarely read anything except what is assigned. They are prisoners of one time, one place, one culture. Even in my classes of advanced students, few have the passion, the need, to read on their own. They enjoy the assignments, and they dutifully copy suggested lists. But where are the readers of yesteryear? I've threatened to have a library lock-in, and perhaps this year I'll follow up on my threat. We'll spend a Sunday afternoon in the library and do nothing but read. Can we have reading sessions, at all grade levels, in which students learn that they can have other parents, other English teachers? And experience how they can leave themselves and return at will?

The Principal's Desire to Foster Teachers' Intellectual and Personal Growth

Gloria Solomon
Hewitt Elementary School, Birmingham, Alabama

Not unlike parents' desires for their children, I, a principal, want my teachers to grow personally and intellectually. I want them to risk trying new teaching ideas. But what if they end up passionately believing that every teacher on the staff should do as they do? What if they believe, for example, that every reading teacher needs to teach exclusively from the part to the whole? What if their beliefs are at odds with what I know from years of teaching experience and personal growth? Why can't I allow others the time for lifelong growth even if part of their growth may be disagreement with me?

Food for the Mind, 1989-90: Emphasis on Reading Program

Submitted by Ann Gathings
Valley Elementary School, Pelham, Alabama

"Emphasis on Reading" is a program sponsored by the Children's and School Librarians Division of the Alabama Library Association to encourage reading in public schools. Each year students across the state vote on their favorite books from an annotated list provided by the Alabama Library Association. These are the lists for 1989-90:

List for Grades K-2

The Forest: Our Changing World by David Bellamy. Potter, 1988.

In the forest plants and animals coexist in their natural environment. Can they survive a human-made catastrophe?

Hanna's Hog by Jim Aylesworth. Atheneum, 1988.

Knowing that a bear did not really get her hog, Hanna uses her imagination to give Kenny Jackson a dose of his own medicine and make sure that her chickens and hog will not be bothered again.

The House on Maple Street by Bonnie Pryor. Morrow, 1987.

The two children who live at 107 Maple Street find an arrowhead and a tiny china cup buried in their yard. Who lived here before and left behind these treasures? (Good introduction to archeology.)

Little Old Man Who Could Not Read by Irma Simonton Black. Whitman, 1968.

What a disaster going to the grocery store could be if you could not read! Eating might become a disgusting adventure.

The Pirates of Bedford Street by Rachel Isadora. Greenwillow, 1988.

Joey goes to the movies on Saturday afternoon and gets in trouble when he draws the actions on the walls and sidewalks along his street.

The Secret Birthday Message by Eric Carle. Harper, 1972.

Tim gets a mysterous letter for his birthday written in code! Tim and the reader are off following clues which lead to a wonderful birthday surprise.

This is the Bear by Sarah Hayes. Lippincott, 1986.

Uh Oh! The teddy bear has been pushed into a bin and carted to the garbage dump. Will the boy and his dog find it?

The Train to Lulu's by Elizabeth Howard. Bradbury, 1988.

Each time Beppy and Babs hear the conductor call out the names of the towns, they know they are getting closer to Great-Aunt Lulu's where summer vacation will really begin.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

List for Grades 3-5

Herbie Jones and the Class Gift by Suzy Kline. Putnam, 1987.

Trouble follows Herbie and his best friend Raymond when they are trusted to pick up the gift their class is giving their teacher. Can their end-of-school party be saved?

In Trouble Again, Zelda Hammersmith? by Lynn Hall. Harcourt, 1987.

Zelda has her troubles! Her revenge on a bullying fourth-grade classmate backfires, she is caught trying to destroy her report card, and the surprise horse she bought for her mother's birthday has some surprises for her.

The Kid in the Red Jacket by Barbara Park. Knopf, 1987.

Ten-year-old Howard has to overcome being the new kid in school. His only neighbor is a six-year-old girl who wants to be his friend. What ten-year-old boy wants to have a six-year-old for a friend, especially a girl!

Martha Washington by Ruth Waldrop. Rusk, 1987.

The story of the life of our nation's "first" First Lady is told in this biography.

Moss Gown by William Hooks. Ticknor, 1987.

Candace does not flatter her father as much as her wicked sisters do, and she is banished from the plantation. A voodoo woman, a gown made of moss, and Prince Charming help Candace show she is the one who truly loves her father.

The Problem with Pulcifer by Florence Parry Heide. Lippincott, 1982.

Pulcifer prefers reading to watching television. Are his parents, teachers, and even a psychiatrist correct in thinking he has a problem?

Rosy Cole's Great American Guilt Club by Sheila Greenwald. Atlantic Monthly, 1985.

Rosy Cole does not wear designer label clothes or have a summer cottage. By creating the Great American Guilt Club, Rosy uses the guilt of her wealthy friends to help her acquire these expensive items. Does having them make her a happier, more popular person?

A Visit to Washington, D. C. by Jill Krementz. Scholastic, 1987.

Matt Wilson, a young boy who lives in Washington, DC, shares his favorite places to visit in our nation's capital. (A map and addresses are included.)

List for Grades 6-8

Dragon Wings by Laurence Yep. Harper, 1975.

This sensitive story of Moon Shadow and his father, Windrider, who dreams of flying, is based on a true account of a Chinese immigrant who built a biplane in 1909.

Fast Sam, Cool Clyde and Stuff by Walter Dean Myers. Viking, 1975.

The new kid on the block, Stuff, quickly becomes involved with Fast Sam and Cool Clyde in their humorous adventures.

Indian Chiefs by Russell Freedman. Holiday House, 1987.

As the white Americans move westward, six Indian leaders make the choice of fighting or surrendering.

Mad, Mad, Monday by Herma Silverstein. Lodestar, 1988.

A fourteen-year-old girl and the ghost of a 'fifties heart-throb have great fun while trying to solve their problems.

Pageant by Kathryn Lasky. Four Winds, 1986.

Sarah Benjamin is the only Jewish teenager attending an exclusive girls school in Indianapolis. This book spans these stormy but often hilarious school years.

Park's Quest by Katherine Paterson. Lodestar, 1988.

Eleven-year-old Park makes some startling discoveries when he travels to his grandfather's farm in Virginia to learn about his father who died in the Vietnam War.

Razor Eyes by Richard Hough. Lodestar, 1983.

Despite a deep, panicky fear of being hurt, Mick joins the R. A. F. as soon as he turns 18. As a fighter pilot early in World War II, he has to cope with constant danger. He learns the meaning of duty and courage in England's struggle for survival.

The Twisted Window by Lois Duncan. Delacorte, 1987.

Tracy becomes involved with a strange boy who leads her through a "twisted window." All of her wits are required to resolve this bizarre situation.

List for Grades 9-12

American Eccentrics: One Hundred and Forty of the Greatest Human Interest Stories Ever Told by Carl Sifakis. Facts on File, 1984.

A series of short vignettes describing eccentric and unusual Americans from the beginning of our history to the present time. A lively, witty compilation to entice and entertain all types of readers.

Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistlestop Cafe by Fannie Flagg. Random, 1987.

The stories of Idgie and Ruth and all the good folks of Whistlestop, Alabama, come to life as the past and the present collide in a jumble of newspaper clippings, reminiscences, and recipes.

Not Without My Daughter: A True Story by Betty Mahmoody and William Hoffer. St. Martin's, 1987.

A short Iranian vacation turns into an 18-month ordeal for an American woman and her daughter. Imprisoned by her Iranian husband, she must find a way to rescue herself and her daughter from people who are hostile to Americans.

Page 4 by Sheila Soloman Klass. Scribner, 1986.

In the past year Dave Smith has watched his father leave, his mother withdraw, and his life fall apart. His hope for college is slim. He tells his side of the story in his college essay.

Red Sky at Morning by Richard Bradford. Harper, 1968.

When his father leaves to fight in World War II, Josh Arnold and his mother move from Mobile, Alabama to Sagrado, New Mexico. Josh learns to fit in, grow up, and take charge as his mother slowly withers away in the new setting.

The Solitary by Lynn Hall. Scribner, 1986.

Seventeen-year-old Jane is seeking to gain independence from the cruel uncle she has lived with since her mother was sent to prison for killing her father. She returns to her old home and attempts to become self-supporting.

Singularity by William Sleator. Dutton, 1985.

Sixteen-year-old twins discover a door to another universe in which distortions in time and space create changes in the brothers' competitive personalities.

They Cage Animals at Night by Michael Burch Jennings. New American Library, 1984.

The plight of an abandoned child, shuffled between institutions and foster homes, is told in this moving story.

If these books are not available in your school library, perhaps the librarian at your public library can help you obtain them. When you have collected the eight books on the list for your grade, read them aloud or tell the students the stories. Then, ask your students to vote for their favorite book. Tally the responses and, before May 1, 1990, submit the tally sheets to a designated representative in your school or to Donna Smith, Chair, Emphasis on Reading Committee, North Highland Elementary School Library, 2021 29th Avenue North, Hueyton, Alabama 35023. To get a copy of the booklists and tally form, contact Martha Philippoff, Cheaha Regional Library, P. O. Box 308, Anniston, Alabama 36202.

Happy booktalking.

My Professional Concern

Lynn Murphy
Hewitt Elementary School, Trussville, Alabama

The lack of a definition for education concerns me. What do administrators, teachers, parents, or society in general expect from our educational system? It seems that more and more parents expect educational institutions not only to be concerned with academic knowledge but also to be the source of ethical and moral development for students. Parents complain that their children are self-centered and uncaring about those around them. They seem to expect teachers to provide some type of magical instruction in how to be a "good person." However, these are the same people who are outraged when we provide opportunity for discussion of ethical and moral issues through experiences and reflection in reading and writing. They seem to feel threatened by allowing their children to develop the ability to see several sides of a question and then form an opinion. How do we educate these parents in what our role is in their child's development?

Have You Read. . ?

Submitted by Peggy Swoger
Mountain Brook Junior High School, Mountain Brook, Alabama

Ted Hipple from the University of Tennessee recently conducted a "reading" poll among nationally known English teachers and English educators. Recommended reading for all secondary English teachers include these fiction works written in the 1980s:

Beloved: A Novel by Toni Morrison

Cold Sassy Tree by Olive Ann Burns

Color Purple: A Novel by Alice Walker

The Bonfire of the Vanities by Tom Wolfe

In Country: A Novel by Bobbie Ann Mason

The Prince of Tides by Pat Conroy

Cider House Rules: A Novel by John Irving

The Accidental Tourist by Anne Tyler

Recommended adolescent novels include:

The Chocolate War: A Novel by Robert Cormier

The Outsiders by S. E. Hinton

The Pigman: A Novel by Paul Zindel

Home Before Dark: A Novel by Sue Ellen Bridgers

The Moves Make the Man: A Novel by Bruce Brooks

Jacob Have I Loved by Katherine Paterson

A Day No Pigs Would Die by Robert Newton Peck

All Together Now by Sue Ellen Bridgers

Words by Heart by Ouida Sebestyen

Dicey's Song by Cynthia Voigt

Summer of My German Soldier by Bette Greene

The Contender by Robert Lipsyte

A Bridge to Terabithia by Katherine Paterson

After the First Death: A Novel by Robert Cormier

I Am the Cheese: A Novel by Robert Cormier

Fallen Angels by Walter Dean Myers

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry by Mildred D. Taylor

Recommended professional works include:

Inside Out: Developmental Strategies for Teaching Writing by Dan Kirby and Tom Liner, with Ruth Vinz

The Reader, the Text, and the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work by Louise M. Rosenblatt

In the Middle: Writing, Reading, and Learning with Adolescents by Nanci Atwell

Cultural Literacy: What Every American Should Know by E. D. Hirsch

Horace's Compromise: The Dilemma of the American High School by Ted Sizer

Metamorphosis

Susan Yates

For sixteen years. . .

I demanded order,
        had neat rows,
        presided from my desk,
        ran the show—
I was in charge.

I lectured tirelessly,
        dispensed pearls of wisdom,
        tested painfully,
        graded endlessly—
I taught.

I inspired some students,
        knew their admiration,
        coached them well,
        shared their successes—
I was good.

But as time passed. . .

I didn't reach them all,
        recognized needs,
        did lots of research,
        asked questions of myself—
I grew restless.

And finally. . .

I left the front to write and read,
        joined the group,
        opened my eyes and ears,
        discovered my students as people—
We worked together, we learned, we were good!

A Composition Assignment

Joe Ross
University of Alabama at Birmingham

The first piece of writing that I have my students in freshmen English do is a report of a interview with a classmate. This interview is conducted for the purpose of introducing that student to the class. As a first writing for the class, this activity fulfills at least three functions. First, it enables each student to become acquainted with another student in the class. This introduction is informal and sets a relaxed tone for the class. Second, the writing has a clear purpose and is not done simply to fulfill an assignment. If students have a immediate use for writing, they will perform better. Third, it provides practice in taking notes and then writing from those notes, thus establishing a procedure that can be used in more complex assignments.

The students check with their interviewees to ensure accuracy and to fill in gaps in their introductions. I have the students read the introductions in class, allowing everyone to become acquainted with everyone else. I participate in this assignment, interviewing a student and writing an introduction. They see from my paper an example of an introduction, although I do not hold my writing up as the best work. The students find this interviewing assignment relatively easy and enjoyable.

My Professional Concern

Test Scores

Misti McAdams
Hewitt Elementary School, Trussville, Alabama

The view that society has taken toward standardized test scores concerns me deeply. It seems as though the most important criterion for evaluation of a school or a teacher is test scores. Society deems these scores sacred, even though they do not accurately measure learning or knowledge. Instead of being quality indicators of learning, standardized tests center on "Trivial Pursuit" learning. "Trivial Pursuit" knowledge is not whole learning. We want our children to be well-rounded "whole" individuals but then teach individual skills out of context. Society has begun to view high test scores as utmost priorities. It is up to us as teachers to show people that test scores are not true indicators of learning.

Word Warriors

Cindy S. Henderson
Northview High School, Dothan, Alabama

Teachers of writing we are:
Word warriors, in truth.
Legion we stand as we battle the dragon.
We seek him lurking deep-dark
Behind walnut-paneled doors,
Entwined in life-locked minds shut up in ivory towers.
His tracks etch flagrantly in useless tomes
Which open only to close minds.
He robes himself in dull curricula,
Slick professional patter.
Discouragement is his hellish spawn—
Apathy, his name:
Yet even now he lurks.

Could it be that his bastions
Lie not in foreign corners,
But in the cold-dark-dank
Of our own closed minds?
Could it be that our cunning-cut weapons
Blunt sharply at our own pathetic stupor?
Do we dare raise our own pens
In that sea of unspoken words,
Or have we sealed ourselves
In tarnished majesty,
Remotely commanding our sullen troops
While discretely avoiding our own quests?

How fight we our wars. . . ?

Word warriors are we
And ever must we be,
Forging bold paths with our own words
Even as we lead.
For we who are
Called to be word warriors
Must prove worthy of the words,
Lest the dragon take hold
In our own hearts.

Insult to Intelligence: The Bureaucratic Invasion of Our Classrooms.

By Frank Smith. 1986. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1988. 284 pp. $14.00.

Reviewed by
Warren W. Werner
Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama

This book is a tonic, a July afternoon breeze. Summer is when many of us actively forget about the classroom in order to refresh and renew ourselves for the start of the fall term. Teaching is a demanding and rewarding and draining profession that requires periods of release to regather energy and refocus priorities and forget frustrations. A July breeze or even a July afternoon with no wind and only the Alabama sun which makes the skin ache does a lot for education, even though both breeze and sun are outside the loop of educational accountability. But there are other kinds of tonics, too, that come in bottles we store on medicine cabinet shelves but which we never use because we forget about them or find that they do not work at all.

Frank Smith's *Insult to Intelligence* presents two methods, two philosophies, of education. The first is the education found today in most classrooms, K-16; the other occasionally appears in isolated pockets, somewhat like a minor virus, existing more as an ideal than an established practice. The first is the education of drills and frequent objective testing, of the short right answer and teaching to the test, of programmatic instruction and basal readers and phonics, of measurement and grades and standardization and accountability and quality control, of rote memorization of nonsense disconnected to any useful activity. The second is the education of learning through purpose and trust, of learning subjects and material that are understandable, of learning through activities students care about and which make sense to them, of learning by students helping each other and the teacher to learn (because "learning is collaborative"), of learning from persons who possess the knowledge students want to learn. The first is the education of the r-bbit (pronounced "are-bit"), the insult to everyone's intelligence that has invaded our classrooms. The second is the education of the club, the tonic that could help us refocus on the aim of education.

The r-bbit is Smith's symbol for the widespread use of programmatic instruction and continual testing of discrete, disconnected units of information—the smaller the better—which are constructed and imposed upon classrooms by outside experts. Students' intelligence and progress (and teachers' performance) are measured solely by this testing, but unfortunately the only skill such testing measures is the ability to take tests. This method of instruction is nonsensical; to have students learn to fill in the blank in r-bbit and then test them on their ability to fill in that blank correctly is not education and corresponds to no real-world activity they will have to perform as human beings. R-bbit teaches nothing about using the word *rabbit*, nothing about our living language, and nothing about rabbits. However, the r-bbit has proved as fecund as any rabbit, multiplying itself throughout education. Such trivial tasks have always been a component of education (for example, ancient Greek and Roman students performed exercises as mindless as any r-bbit, a point

Smith misses), but in our century we have elevated the statistical analysis of trivial performance to the goal of education.

Smith's book is an extended plea against this educational method. He is generous in assigning blame for it: teachers, students, parents, principals, administrators, researchers, textbook publishers, and politicians all share responsibility. But why has the r-bbit flourished so ubiquitously? Because filling in r-bbit is measurable, countable, and the numbers provide an objective demonstration of students' progress, or lack of such. We have become slaves to the cult of objectivity, even though objectivity may be undesirable or impossible to achieve. We no longer trust individual judgment, as if it were suspect. Specifically, we no longer trust individual teachers to know best what to do in their own classrooms. Even teachers no longer trust themselves, crippled as we are by the myth of objectivity.

In contrast to the r-bbit, Smith advocates education modeled after the club in which the members share interests and knowledge. Learning, for Smith, is easy, and children learn easily. For example, children acquire a huge vocabulary all on their own, without benefit of formal instruction or any testing. They master language to use it—the way they see others use it. Smith's premise is that "Learning is the brain's primary function." If that is the case, then what the r-bbit lacks is motivation, a purposeful reason to learn. Such motivation develops in children—and in anyone else—when they want to join the club, whether of speakers, readers, writers, mathematicians, book reviewers, or whatever. When children see others performing or participating in an activity that they want to join in, too, then they learn. My description of Smith's learning club is short and simple because ultimately learning is simple and easy. People learn what they want or need to learn.

The challenge for teachers at all levels is to structure the classroom, structure the learning, in ways to foster in students the desire to learn, to join the club. To attract students to learning, education does not have to be fun (fun soon turns boring) or easy (learning may be easy but the tasks should be challenging), and instead of teaching units of information we should engage students in meaningful, whole activities. Such is the tonic of Smith's book. The greatest danger is that no one will take this book down from the shelf and read it; the lesser danger is that, after being read, it will be returned to the shelf and forgotten about. Education at the farthest extreme from the r-bbit is only a simple fantasy since testing and grades will never be abandoned wholesale, but *Insult to Intelligence* is a reminder of what education should really be all about. Its breeze could flow profitably through my classroom any day of the year.

The Emergence of Literacy

By Nigel Hall. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1987. 112 pp. $14.00.

Reviewed by
Lynn Mills
Auburn University at Montgomery, Montgomery, Alabama

> Literacy seems to emerge in contexts which enable children to experience language as a totally meaningful phenomenon. Within such contexts the expectations children have about print making sense are affirmed. It is through knowing what written language can do that children gain control over its form.

This phrase exemplifies the theme of Nigel Hall's book, *The Emergence of Literacy*. The author begins with an overview of recent views and research on the emergence of literacy. He presents several conventional assumptions about literacy and then provides the reader with research findings of well-known authors in the field such as Emilia Ferreiro and Ana Teberosky, Marie Clay, Kenneth Goodman, and Frank Smith.

Hall discusses the similarity between oral language and literacy development, asserting that language is a process in both instances and should be treated as such. He delves briefly into how children successfully learn oral language and literacy without direct instruction emphasizing the importance of stories read aloud, environmental print, and meaningful writing in helping a child become literate. He asserts that children are not waiting for the school to teach them reading and writing skills but already have a working knowledge, although not complete, of both before they enter school. Unfortunately, when most students enter school that natural process of learning is interrupted by direct instruction, causing the children to sit idly by while a teacher attempts to fill their heads with the knowledge of literacy.

The author cautions against using reading readiness tests because of the inability of these tests to indicate true normal literacy behavior. He mentions possible alternatives such as Marie Clay's *Concepts About Print Test* (CAP), John Downing's *Linguistic Awareness in Reading Readiness Test* (LARR), and Yetta Goodman's Kidwatching techniques (TAWL). Hall concludes his book with helpful suggestions on how to make the school environment conducive to literacy development.

Hall's book is directed at educators concerned with beginning literacy development and especially those searching for a plausible explanation of why some children fail to become literate. Educators of young children are saddened by the fact that skills have become an end in themselves and that reading and writing have become something to practice, not to use. Nigel Hall has effectively consolidated recent research on literacy development as it relates to Piagetian theory and explains it in a clear and simple fashion. Don't look for heavy analysis of the theory in this book. Hall presents just an overview, a tantalizing glimpse that makes you yearn for more. This book along with its extensive list of references offers a starting point for the avid researcher and food for thought to the classroom teacher.

Ideas and Insights: Language Arts in the Elementary School

By Dorothy J. Watson, ed. 1987. Urbana: NCTE. 243 pp.

Reviewed by
Joyce T. Nix
Jim Pearson Elementary School, Alexander City, Alabama

Although most elementary teachers seek new ideas and insights into the latest research from a variety of sources, the ideas that usually influence them the most are the ones that come directly from other classroom teachers. Theory and research must be practical as well as adaptable. Good ideas are eagerly shared and enjoyed because they work. *Ideas and Insights: Language Arts in the Elementary School* provides some of the best ideas for classroom activities from teachers in the United States, Canada, and Australia and insights into research from well-known advocates of the whole language approach.

Ideas and Insights is organized into two major divisions. The first division contains theoretical essays by Leland Jacobs, Kenneth Goodman, and Donald Graves. The second division is broken into five parts, with each part giving classroom activities and student examples. Each activity has a "why," "who," "how," and "what else" section. Part I considers language learning through reading; part II, language learning through writing; part III, language across the curriculum; part IV, parents and students as resources for language learning; and part V, assessment. The book also contains an extensive bibliography, which includes references to read-aloud books, wordless books, and books with predictable language.

I have enjoyed reading *Ideas and Insights* and using the activities it discusses and will keep it handy for future use. In its whole language approach, this book offers alternatives to prefabricated instruction in reading and writing. It is not a recipe book but a useful guide for teachers trying to move from teaching skills in isolation to an integrated approach. As Dorothy Watson points out in her introduction, "the activities were selected as suggestions for possible use in your own curriculum and in hopes they will allow both students and teachers freedom and space, for this is what encourages marvelous things to happen."

Introduction to Folklore

By David C. Laubach. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1989. 187 pp.

Reviewed by
Charles Avinger
Troy State University, Troy, Alabama

Folklore is a rapidly expanding area of interest in both college and high school English departments. Laubach's book is designed to acquaint teachers and students with this fascinating field. Chapter one asks the question, "What is Folklore?" and provides a four-part definition: folklore is oral, traditional within a certain group, extant in different versions, and of anonymous origin. Laubach uses these criteria to distinguish true folklore such as legends, folk songs, and superstitions from "fakelore" such as the Paul Bunyan stories (which were actually invented by an advertising executive for a lumber company but are commonly mistaken for folktales). Laubach also makes clear distinctions between different types of folklore, including folk beliefs, urban belief tales, folk lyrics, and ballads. Examples of each type of folklore are provided.

In addition to a thorough discussion of the most common types of folklore, Laubach includes chapters on lesser-known varieties of folklore. Riddles, games such as "Hide and Seek," and children's rhymes may strike readers as odd subjects for academic study, but Laubach makes a convincing argument for considering them part of folk culture. Similarly, Laubach devotes a chapter to material folk culture, describing how folk art (including weathervanes and tombstones), folk crafts (such as pottery and Amish furniture), and even folk cooking can reveal much about the people who produce them. One of the most interesting sections, an excerpt from *The Foxfire Book*, describes traditions associated with the making of quilts. Illustrated with photographs and designs, this section reveals the rich and colorful history that can be bound up in a seemingly ordinary item.

Of particular significance to English teachers are the chapters entitled "Folklore and Literature," "Folklore and Oral History," and "Folk Songs, Ballads, and Dances." These chapters show how folklore has been incorporated into works of literature from the *Odyssey* to *Roots*. Selections such as "The Minister's Black Veil" and "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" are included so that students may analyze them for their folklore content. Other works of literature are folklore in and of themselves: the ballads of "Barbara Allen" and "Sir Patrick Spence," familiar to students of literature, are presented here along with interpretations that discuss their folk origins.

Laubach does not want students simply to absorb facts about his subject. Throughout the book he encourages readers to take an active role in discovering and analyzing folklore on their own. One chapter, "Collecting Folklore," describes methods by which anyone can gather and study folklore. Practical suggestions about selecting informants and collecting data are sufficient to get even a novice started obtaining samples of folklore. Indeed, the practical applications presented throughout the book are one of its educational strong points. Eschewing typical end-of-chapter review questions, Laubach instead presents a selection of projects that can be completed by students either individually or in groups. Projects ranging from collecting folk beliefs from friends and relatives to finding and presenting an object of folk art are designed to involve students actively in the learning process. The activities in the book should make folklore come alive for students.

Introduction to Folklore is suitable for use as a classroom text. Its short chapters, clear and simple writing style, and high-interest material make it appropriate for secondary students at a variety of academic levels. Where a course devoted exclusively to the study of folklore is not possible, the book could serve as the basis for a unit on folklore in an English or social studies class. The projects could be completed by students at a wide range of grade levels. In fact, some of them could be adapted for elementary school children.

Introduction to Folklore is a well-written introduction to an intriguing subject. Laubach demonstrates how the various types of folklore "show the vitality, ingenuity, and occasionally the eloquence of the people who made them." Obviously fascinated with his subject, Laubach does not hesitate to communicate his excitement to his readers. "A great name!" he exclaims when telling about a lumber company executive named W.B. Laughead. Laubach's unrestrained enthusiasm for his subject is infectious. Readers who previously knew nothing about folklore are likely to start interviewing their relatives and examining family heirlooms after finishing the book. As Laubach points out, "The art of collecting is still alive in Rabun Gap and in many other high schools. Inspired by *Foxfire*, students have published magazines about their own communities." A study of Laubach's book could easily inspire other students to start such projects as well.

A Preface to Literacy: An Inquiry into Pedagogy, Practice, and Progress.

By Myron Tuman. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 1987. $ 18.95.

Reviewed by
Thomas A. Brennan
University of South Alabama, Mobile, Alabama

Books that make heavy demands on our willingness to revise fundamental views are always difficult to stick with. But sticking with Tuman's book is worth it. What we get from our efforts is a much richer understanding of the nature and value of literacy. That new understanding, argued for from many perspectives, is crucial because without it, we will continue not only to misconceive the nature and value of literacy but also to perpetuate our pedagogy, practice, and progress on the basis of that misconception. Tuman makes a great deal depend on his revision; there are more things in his view of literacy than are dreamt of in our utilitarian reduction—our old concept of it.

Tuman believes that misunderstanding over the nature and value of literacy begins with the identification of literacy with one mode of discourse, the mode used to accomplish something practical. Britton calls this the participant mode, and others call it the referential mode. Of course, this mode has its valuable function, but what Tuman takes great pains to show is that literacy equated with the practical mode is a little like valuing the outhouse over the mansion. The view from the outhouse misvalues or undervalues both reading and writing, but writing especially is disesteemed because most people can get on well enough without it—or so the advocates of functional literacy argue. Reading, is grudgingly valued because it has obvious uses in the "real" world. It makes people more immediately functional: "Lift receiver, put coin in slot, dial/enter number." Tuman wants us to take our view of literacy from the mansion instead of the outhouse.

The reduction of literacy to the functional uses of reading and writing is compounded by the need of educators to achieve bureaucratic goals entailed in the utilitarian view of literacy. This need has given rise to what Tuman calls "the unproblematic model of literacy." Educators have adopted a simple model of literacy which allows them to determine with relative ease who is literate and who is illiterate. The determination is based on how well speech is transcribed (writing) and how well speech is decoded (reading). This speech-based model not only is peripheral to literacy but also confuses two different modes of discourse—speech and writing. Tuman contends that literacy cannot be understood exclusively as a set of readily measurable transcription and decoding skills. The key to understanding literacy lies in recognizing how the written mode functions to generate meanings that speech rarely achieves. By shifting our attention to inherent differences between spoken and written discourse, Tuman redefines the central problem of "literate communication with reference to meaning rather than to coding skills." In other words, in place of speech-based models of literacy, Tuman offers a problematic model based upon symbolic activity generally.

In Tuman's redefinition, literacy is essentially a creative act, entailing the power of mind to compose meanings which break the social uses of language tying us to any one historical moment. Tuman calls language which ties us to momentary meanings "synecdochic verbal communication." The break away from synecdochic ties, or context-bound use of language, is not a complete rejection of those ties but rather a reinterpretation of them, which expands "our sense of who we are and where we live." But overcoming synecdochic ties and expectations is always a problem. Nowadays the synecdochic impulse manifests as indifference, if not outright hostility to verbal meanings in written texts. Literate competency is in part a willingness to leave behind personal preconceptions and the social preconceptions of one's milieu and in part a willingness to open the mind to the world of the text. Both readers and writers must free themselves from synecdochic ties.

Language, then, as literacy, as symbolic communication, is the ongoing process of making and remaking ourselves and our culture. The saying and unsaying of literacy is the process of culture itself, an evolution that unfolds from the struggle between symbolic understanding and synecdochic practice.

To show the interrelationship between human development, literacy, and culture, Tuman has recourse to Piaget's view of development. In the Piagetian view, humans develop symbolic language given favorable conditions for rich interaction between accommodation and assimilation, or, put another way, between imitation and play. When children are able to perform certain actions reflecting symbolic thought processes, they also develop the ability to generate and comprehend symbolic language as well. Literacy, as an outgrowth of language and action, is the culminative stage in the development of the transformative powers which are the hallmark of cognitive growth; that is, the use of words-as-symbols comes at the end of a long developmental process beginning for humans in childhood and beginning culturally in our "primitive" past.

The interaction between accommodation and assimilation goes on throughout the developmental stages becoming increasingly complex and transposed as the stage of development Piaget calls the "concept" stage fully unfolds. As the impetus toward play becomes more fully constructive, reflecting real rather than fanciful transformative powers, literacy too evolves and along with it theoretical understanding of the world, or what Tuman calls "verbal praxis." According to Tuman, all goal-directed activity using skills, knowledge, and technology divides into practice and praxis. Under practice he classifies all activities "that tend to preserve the existing balance between assimilation and accommodation," and under praxis he classifies all activities "that tend to create a new, weightier balance by making accommodation more deliberate and assimilation more constructive." Literacy "comes to life only in the efforts of people to use written language in acts of praxis."

But literacy is not likely to achieve its full transformative powers in social and educatory environments too thin to sustain a high degree of theoretical understanding. Schools could be a vehicle for a powerful exfoliation of literacy and in the process break traditional patterns of social reproduction, but more often than not they fall far short of this ideal. More often than not the conservative bias of schools clashes with the kind of liberating activity that comes with literacy. Schools should promote praxis, but to be more than just praxis in theory, schooling needs to be far less concerned with preconceived notions of correctness and with teaching students the right responses to questions or with giving them practical training in particular tasks and far more concerned with pursuing the generation of meaning in acts of praxis.

Literacy, however, as a form of praxis in the classroom, will not take hold unless students are motivated to engage in it. According to Tuman, motivation will come when reading and writing texts are integrated with a pedagogy oriented toward assisting students to clarify and pursue goals important to them. However, what generally happens in the schooling process is that the machinery of literacy—synecdochic practices such as handwriting, spelling, punctuation, and regurgitation—get reinforced by students, parents, and teachers unfamiliar with the symbolic demands of literacy.

The pedagogy of schools will continue to reproduce itself in the synecdochic mold as long as the dominant values knitting together the social substratum have such a firm political hold on the public schools. Schools cannot directly change the political process. Nevertheless, Tuman believes teachers need to place the "commitment to symbolic truth at the center of reading and writing instruction." Our first priority as educators "has to be the continual effort to make the pedagogic process itself increasingly more symbolic; we must work to ensure that it is better able to overcome the inherent obstacles posed by the existence of class and by patterns of social reproduction generally."

Tuman believes the future of literacy is in serious doubt because there is so little understanding of why it is important to read and write symbolic texts and because innovations and continuous growth of technology could destroy the sense of tension between what is and what can be. That is, technological mastery of nature and the production of the machines and gadgets that go with it can destroy the tension that makes theoretical understanding possible. Without this tension, praxis and literacy are impossible.

The major problem that I see with Tuman's analysis and redefinition of literacy is that he makes a great deal depend on what he calls synecdochic communication as a mode of discourse hindering symbolic responses. Placing synecdochic communication in Piagetian/Vygotskian developmental sequence is a brilliant stroke. But if Tuman is right about the inhibitive effect of synecdochic communication, then it seems to me the developmental perspective needs to be expanded and enriched at both ends of the developmental sequence. For the early years, use of M. A. K. Halliday's study *Learning How to Mean: Explorations in the Development of Language* would buttress Tuman's overall contention that symbolic communication emerges as part of the developmental pattern. For the onset of the adult years, William Perry's *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years: A Scheme* and other studies in similar veins would give us a fuller picture of the difficulties involved in the transition from synecdochic communication to symbolic communication. But, of course, Tuman cannot be expected to handle everything when his book was only meant to be a "preface" to literacy. Perhaps others will take up the discussion from the excellent beginning he has made.

Editor's note: This book was runner up for the Mina P. Shaughnessy Award in 1988.

Worlds of Writing: Teaching and Learning In Discourse Communities of Work

By Carolyn B. Matalene, ed. 1989. New York: Random House. 399 pp.

Reviewed by
Patricia S. Gaston
Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama

Worlds of Writing contains 23 essays by writers who have worked both inside and outside academic discourse communities. Since these writers were trained in and employed by traditional university English departments before they became consultants and professional writers, they are in an informed position from which they can speak authoritatively about what is involved in this transition. Moreover, as a group, these writers raise the central issues confronted by this text. What are the significant differences between writing as taught and evaluated in college composition courses and that which is required and used in the workplace? What are the criteria for identifying good writing and to whom should this evaluative power belong? What would the optimal relationship be between teachers of writing and the values they teach and workplace employers and the values they demand?

Worlds of Writing is intended to be a manifesto—and in at least one startling way, it is. In her "Introduction," Carolyn Matalene identifies her audience as all of us who make the transition from writing within the confines of the university, including students in disciplines which prepare them for careers other than university teaching, those who teach them writing, and English teachers who will become professional writers. Matalene states that this text's purpose is pragmatic consciousness-raising: "This volume is intended to increase cultural awareness and to provide new information about the nature of writing in a number of discourse communities central to our economic life." Here, Matalene has already managed to sound the alarm for most of us who teach composition or writing about literature, in that she identifies the link between writing and commerce. She points out that "to be a white-collar worker today very likely means being a writer."

Matalene goes on to identify the training that many college composition students receive as "text-based notions of writing" which cannot "provide an appropriate theoretical ground for preparing our students to become writers." So much for composition teachers—but is this the radical reevaluation Matalene intends? The split between English departments and the sullied worlds of trade, commerce, and the professions is long-standing and well-documented from both sides of the breach, and so is its descendant, the split within English departments which house technical writing programs. But the duration of these conflicts does not lead to their solution—a point made by many of the essays here. Where Matalene makes her most emphatic point is in her claim that all discourse communities ultimately have important news for one another and that this news is based on two things. First, audience and purpose—the twin touchstones of many a college composition textbook—come to life in the worlds of work and so they must be revitalized in early writing instruction. As Nancy Wilds points out in her essay "Writing in the Military: A Different Mission," human lives may indeed depend on how well an author handles audience and purpose; or as Dan Dieterich, George Jensen, and Aletha Hendrickson point out in the chapter "Writing in the World of Finance," financial lives may be at stake. Second, language itself is opaic and prone to misbehavior, while having the power to construct the world in which it operates. Theresa Godwin Phelps and James C. Raymond do a masterful job in demonstrating this concept in the excellent chapter "Writing in the World of Law." Their view is reenforced by Hendrickson's "How to Appear Reliable Without Being Liable: C.P.A. Writing in Its Rhetorical Context."

That language creates, rather than passively reflects, reality is a thought which strikes terror in the hearts of many an academic writer. The philosophical ramifications of this tenet assault the roots of Western philosophy and discourse theory and the ways writing is taught. In fact, Matalene closes her volume with a full-blown deconstructive reading, "Rhetoric and Bricolage: Theory and Limits in Legal and Other Sorts of Discourse." By including this essay, she tweaks those of us who have been comfortable with her prods at traditional English departments by showing us that literary theory may indeed hold something for business and technical writers.

All of the essays in *Worlds of Writing* deal with the idea that various discourse communities carry within them varying definitions of audience, purpose, text, and good writing. In fact, the *worlds* of the title are themselves discourse communities: the worlds of academic and nonacademic writing and of the trades, the military, industry, journalism, finance, computer technology, and the law. Many of these essays define *discourse community*. For example, in "Writers in Organizations" Jean Ann Lutz defines this concept as "groups whose members can be characterized by their familiarity with discipline-related knowledge and language and by the specialized kinds of discourse competence that enable them to participate in their groups." John Warnock adds "whatever else it may mean to become a member of. . .a profession, it means at least that one has 'acquired' a special language."

If discourse communities depend upon specialization for both community identity and communication efficiency, then a writer within that discourse community must adapt to become an effectual insider. But, as *Worlds of Writing* demonstrates, no discourse community in the working world is isolated: all must interact with customers, the general public, and a myriad of other professional worlds. Thus, an essential conflict and area for confusion arises; what may be good writing within a particular discourse community may be indecipherable to or subject to misreading by others.

All of the essays in this collection espouse reader advocacy in response to this dilemma. An essential feature of good writing in any discourse community, claim the authors, is clarity. But clarity means several things: 1) recognition of the document's primary intended audience, which shares the writer's vocabulary and expertise; 2) recognition of all other probable audiences, which may not; and 3) recognition of the ethos of believability which an authoritatively written document will create and which may—unwittingly—lead to confusion for the less-than-expert audience. Hendrickson's article does a particularly masterful job in illustrating this problem as C.P.A.s encounter it, while Matalene's own article, "A Writing Teacher in the Newsroom," shows how it has wider ramifications.

Reader advocacy—making sure that the intended audience gets what it needs from text it can understand and use—leads to the most radical point in *Worlds of Writing*. This point relates to the ethics of writing, a concept which should be of concern to us all and which extends the definition of good writing beyond mechanical correctness and elegant crafting. Good writing also does good; it does not deny responsibility or encourage duplicity. John Warnock writes that there is "a danger in identifying good writing with meeting the requirements of particular discourse communities." This danger is that the models and jargon used may seem to be working automatically. With no human thought, intent, or an identifiable practitioner, ascribing individual responsibility for content is impossible. In "Rhetoric and the Discourse of Technology," Theresa Enos describes a workplace "alarmed by questionable ethics and outright dishonesty." According to Enos, what is required is recognition of "rhetoric's usefulness in drawing technology and the humanities closer together by placing the voice of the individual and the good of society in a dynamic balance." So, having chafed composition teachers, *Worlds of Writing* now confronts business and technical writing instructors who, as a group, often encourage their students to subordinate the writer's voice to the document's content and conventions.

Where does *Worlds of Writing* leave us, and what does it give English teachers to use? For composition instructors and other inhabitants of traditional college English departments, it offers substantial evidence that writing well is a singularly significant human activity. In particular, Raymond, Enos, and Phelps show how traditional literary texts may integrate into business and technical writing courses. Several essays also suggest the limitations of the process approach to writing outside the composition classroom and offer the addition of model-oriented writing as a supplement. For business and technical writing instructors, there is the startling concept that objectivity is itself a construct, making technical writing hardly less opaic than its more arty or personal siblings. For both, the volume suggests the revaluation of clearly established authorial intent, identification of purpose and audience. All of us involved with teaching English may also appreciate two last features. First, for those considering consulting, this text offers useful advice—especially Edward Gold's "Bridging the Gap: In Which the

Author, an English Major, Recounts His Travels in the Land of the Techies" and Donald Murray's "Don't Profess: Coach." Second, for those concerned with the oddities and politics of pronoun gender in English, the text offers an interesting assortment of solutions to this problem—ranging from consistent use of the plural, through the *he/she* convention, to the alternating use of *he* or *she*, and including one shocking holdout for the "generic" *he*. This text is an excellent source of information about how extensive and important writing is in society now. It could be used as readings for a number of college-level writing courses and as information for anyone teaching writing in high school or college.

What is There in a Star?

Jeanie Thagard
Donoho School, Anniston, Alabama

What is there in a star?
The thoughts of death, the fear of aloneness, the
fear of confronting oneself with all the possibilities
of one's own existence.
What is there in a star?
The reality of life, the space of a second, and
the knowledge of a lifetime—a time warp of truth.
What is there in a star?
The phoenix of birth, life, and death—the burning
knowledge of all that is and all that will ever will be.
What is there in a star?
Look not to the skies for the meaning of life, my friend.
Look within the soul of man.

ACTE To You

Martha Wall, President

This is the news from across the state.

ACTE Members Publish Articles

Two members of the ACTE published articles recently:

Sara McAnulty, "Breaking the Barriers: Teaching Martin Jamison's 'Rivers.'" *English Journal*. February 1989.

Peggy Swoger, "Scott's Gift." *English Journal*. March 1989.

Reading Incentive Council Representatives Appointed

Evelyn Blake represented the ACTE at an organizational meeting of the Reading Incentive Council. This organization is part of a national movement to stress the importance of providing time for reading and easy access to appropriate books. (See the articles in this issue.) Jane Clayton and Ann Gathings were appointed ACTE representatives to serve on the Reading Incentive Council. Jane teaches eighth grade at Montevallo Middle School, and Ann teaches second grade at Valley Elementary School. Both worked together on book selections for the Young Authors' Conference.

1989 ACTE Spring Meeting Held

The ACTE Spring Meeting was held in Montgomery on March 14. Our speaker was Leah Atkins, Director of the Auburn University Center for the Arts & Humanities. Leah has obtained a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to fund the "Read Alabama!" program. In her presentation to the ACTE members in Montgomery, Leah gave an overview of the statewide program and introduced some of the books that are being discussed. Held at public libraries across the state, "Read Alabama!" has created much pride and interest in Alabama writers.

At the ACTE Spring Meeting, Steve McAliley, ACTE Representative from the State Department of Education, announced that the 1988-89 Paul Schied Scholarship was awarded to Kathy Woodfin from Scottsboro City Schools. This award is given each year to a teacher who has attended or has made firm plans to attend graduate classes to upgrade his or her teaching certificate or who is committed to participate in a specific professional development project. If you would like to apply for this scholarship, please write to Steve at the State Department of Education, 111 Coliseum Blvd., Montgomery, Alabama 36198 or phone 261-2757. The deadline is February 15.

SLATE Representative Appointed

Clyde Cox from Jacksonville State University has been appointed SLATE representative from ACTE. SLATE (Support for the Learning and Teaching of English) deals with current issues affecting the teaching of English language arts. Organized at the 1975 NCTE Conference, it is an NCTE standing committee on social and political concerns. Although it makes no policy of its own, SLATE seeks to implement and publicize the policies adopted by the NCTE. The *SLATE Newsletter* is sent to individuals who contribute $10 or more each year to support the activities of the NCTE/ SLATE Steering Committee on Social and Political Concerns. Contributions can be sent to NCTE/ SLATE, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61901. If you have concerns that you would like SLATE to discuss, contact Clyde at P. O. Box 337, Jacksonville, Alabama 36265. Clyde will work with the SLATE chair from our district, Marlene Corbett, 2411 Whirlaway Court, Matthews, North Carolina 28105.

1990 NCTE Spring Conference to be Held

The 1990 NCTE Spring Conference will be held March 6-10, 1990 at the Broadmoor Hotel in Colorado Springs, Colorado. The theme is "Broadmoor Summit: Taking the High Ground." Send proposals to 1990 Spring Conference, National Council of Teachers of English, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801.

1989 ACTE Fall Conference to be Held

The ACTE Fall Conference will be held at Parker High School in Birmingham, Alabama on November 3 - 4, 1989. The theme is "Literacy Begins at Home." Guest speakers will be Richard Lloyd-Jones well-known expert in composition studies and co-author of the *English Coalition Report, Democracy Through Language* and Arlene Silberman, author of *Growing Up Writing*. A Saturday afternoon workshop will feature Carol Schlichter, Director of Gifted Education at University of Alabama. Hotel reservations can be made at the Hampton Inn in Mountain Brook (967-2700) or at the Sheraton Perimeter (972-8600).

Alabama English will be pleased to publish announcements of faculty and student achievement at your school or news items of interest to teachers in Alabama. Please send the announcements to Martha Wall, 221 Kent Drive, Homewood, Alabama 35209.

LITERACY FOR ALL

Fall Conference
Alabama Council of Teachers of English
November 3-4

Parker High School
300 8th Avenue North
Birmingham, Alabama

Friday, November 3
4:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

"Literacy Begins at Home"

Speaker: Arlene Silberman, New York City
Author of *Growing Up Writing*

PTA Presidents' Panel

Saturday, November 4
8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

"Literacy for the 90's and Beyond"

Speaker: Richard-Lloyd Jones, University of Iowa
Past-President of NCTE
Co-author of the *English Coalition Report, Democracy Through Language*

Workshops on whole language, the Mississippi Literacy Project, adolescents' reading, and twenty others on current teaching practices in grades K-College.

An Afternoon with Carol
2:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Special Two-Hour Workshop
"Talents Unlimited: A Model for Teaching Thinking Skills K-12"

Carol Schlichter, University of Alabama
Director of Gifted Education

Registration Form for ACTE Fall Conference on following page

Acte

REGISTRATION FORM
To attend the ACTE Fall Conference

Send this form and registration fee to:

Dana K. Basinger
2620 Alta Vista Circle
Birmingham, Alabama 35243
(205) 967-3223

Check appropriate fees:

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On-Site Registration	20.00	______
Special Workshop on Thinking	10.00	______
Saturday Luncheon (deadline Oct. 16)	7.50	______
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Alabama English is seeking manuscripts for publication in its subsequent issues. We are particularly looking for discussions of classroom method and educational philosophy in the teaching of reading, writing, and literature at all grade levels from kindergarten through college. These articles can range in length from 1250 to 4000 words. We also are interested in publishing teaching tips about classroom assignments and essays discussing professional concerns at either a national or a state level. Teaching tips should be 1000 words or less, and essays about professional concerns should be 250 words or less.

All submissions should be typed double space. Please send three copies. If you want your manuscript returned, please enclose a self-addressed mailing envelope with postage attached by a paper clip.

All manuscripts should follow the guidelines in the most recent edition of the *MLA Handbook*.

Submit manuscripts to the following address:

Isabelle Thompson, Editor
Alabama English
Department of English
Auburn University, Alabama 36849

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Dana King Basinger
2620 Alta Vista Circle
Birmingham, Alabama 35243

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ALABAMA ENGLISH

Spring 1990 • Volume 2 • Number 1

Special Issue Featuring Alabama Authors

A Publication of the
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in cooperation with Auburn University
and *"Read Alabama!"*

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in cooperation with Auburn University Extension and
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Volume 2 Number 1 Spring 1990

ALABAMA ENGLISH

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"Great books have been produced by Alabamians. Unfortunately, a lot of people in Alabama don't know it. There's a phenomenon at work here that runs deep. We tend to loathe the place where we live and not believe anything good can come of it. There's balm in Gilead, and there's good literature in Alabama."

Jerry Brown

Who Reads Alabama Literature?

Bert Hitchcock

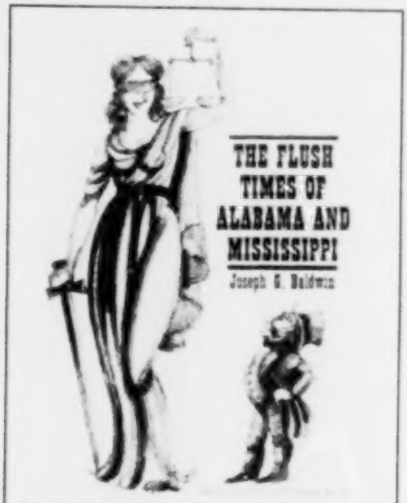
Bert Hitchcock is a member of the English faculty at Auburn University, where he has served as Chair of Freshman English and Department Head. A native of Demopolis, Alabama, he holds degrees from Auburn, the University of Oregon, and Duke University. He has written articles on American writers for such reference books as the Dictionary of Literary Biography, Reference Guide to American Literature, *and* World Book Encyclopedia.

For years (do you remember?) it was traditional for college survey of American literature courses to begin with a thumb-of-the-nose at a hapless Englishman named Sydney Smith (1771-1845). In the 1820 *Edinburgh Review* the Reverend Mr. Smith had not too politely asked questions to which he well knew the answers. "In the four quarters of the globe," he wrote, "who reads an American book? or goes to an American play, or looks at an American picture or statue?" Smith's queries were not so impertinent as they were, finally, ill-timed. By the middle of the nineteenth century the answer to "who reads an American book?" was *many, many persons*, including many of Smith's countrymen. Among the American writers to whom Europe gave impressive acclaim in the 1820s, 1830s, and 1840s were Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, Nathaniel Hawthorne, James Russell Lowell, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Edgar Allan Poe, and Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Today, no less earnestly if not quite so disdainfully, an American may reasonably ask, "Who reads an Alabama book?" (Or desiring to be disdainful, he or she might question whether the term "Alabama literature" is not perhaps an oxymoron.) Unlike a century and a half ago, however, additional time is not needed to produce satisfying statistics. The present answers to this question are: (1) many more people than realize it, and/but (2) not as many as either the quantity or the quality justifies.

Because I am convinced that these are the facts, I escape becoming the equivalent of a used car salesman in trying to write this introductory essay. But, I wonder, exactly who can I be compared to in this task? A revival preacher? (television evangelist?) A coach? A cheerleader? Parade marshal? Service station attendant? Teamster? Being a fervent fisherman, I decide on *local guide*. So that's how I see myself, and ask you to see me now, a local guide—not necessarily a better angler but simply someone who has been on these waters before, who retains wonder and fascination with being there, and who wants other persons to have that knowledge and those experiences.

There is a surprising amount to know and a great, great deal to share. With respect to Alabama literature I've become fond of saying that we sit unknowing amidst great riches. And why shouldn't that be said, with writers like Walker Percy, Truman Capote, Harper Lee, Lillian Hellman, Johnson Jones Hooper, Ambrose Bierce, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Gail Godwin, William Bradford Huie, Sidney Lanier, Margaret Walker, Ralph Ellison, and William March (among many others) who are, in meaningful ways or instances, producers of "Alabama literature"? Under stringent criteria including traditional belletristic production, mainstream national publication, and extensive public recognition (at least at one time), there are, I would say, considerably more than 400 writers for whom this state has been birthplace, residence, or otherwise significant influence. And—this I find particularly exciting—while we have claim to some of the best of the Old Southwest humorists (J. J. Hooper, Joseph Glover Baldwin, George Washington Harris) and some of the most popular novelists (Caroline Lee Hentz and Augusta Jane Evans Wilson) of the nineteenth century, at no time has the literary output and reputation of Alabama writers been greater and more impressive than it is at present.


THE FLUSH TIMES OF ALABAMA AND MISSISSIPPI
Joseph G. Baldwin

Lawyer Joseph G. Baldwin of west Alabama and newspaper editor Johnson Jones Hooper of east Alabama were the state's two most famous Old Southwest humorists. In style and tone, Baldwin's *The Flush Times of Alabama and Mississippi* (1853) was "strikingly dissimilar" to productions of other literary humorists of the period. As an essayist, it is claimed, "Baldwin can be placed among the very best of the nonprofessional authors of antebellum America." (Cover from *The Flush Times of Alabama and Mississippi* by Joseph Baldwin. Copyright 1957 by Sagamore Press, Inc. Copyright renewed 1985 by Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc. Reprinted by permission of Hill and Wang, a division of Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc.)

What evidence supports such a claim? Keying off of major literary prizes, novel reprints, or anthology selections, one can discover Mary Ward Brown, Madison Jones, Gregory Benford, Robert M. McCammon, Elly Welt, Tobias Wolff, Eugene Garber, Andrew Hudgins, Helen Norris, and Vicki Covington, for example. Or your guide can truthfully report from his recent personal experience: browsing in both the new and used book sections of two big-city bookstores, I repeatedly encountered works by writers with Alabama connections: Anne Rivers Siddons, Mark Childress, Mary Monroe, Gail Godwin, Pat Conroy, Celestine Sibley, Lee Smith, William March, Babs Deal, Borden Deal, Bob Inman, Thomas McGuane. Or we can extend this individual experience to much more public, popular experience. In local movie theatres, from neighborhood video stores, or through regular television broadcasting, Americans have been able in recent years to see dramatizations of novels, plays, or short stories by Helen Norris, Paul Hemphill, Anne Rivers Siddons, Truman Capote, Borden Deal, William March, Babs Deal, William Bradford Huie, Eugene Walter, Lillian Hellman, Madison Jones, Joe David Brown, Gustav Hansford, Harper Lee, Winston Groom, and Charles Gaines. I submit to you that the quantity of Alabama literature all about us on the national level is unexpectedly large. And high, too, is its quality, I assert. Usually, and regrettably, we are just simply not aware of its Alabamaness.

This issue of *Alabama English*, I think, illustrates unusually well the extent, diversity, and achievement of Alabama literature. It does so both because of what it does not contain as well as what it includes. It does not, first of all, and

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does not pretend to, deal with the whole canon of nationally published literature from and about Alabama. It attempts not even a superficial survey, much less detailed attention to all state writers of clearly demonstrable merit. That it (wisely) does not attempt these things speaks volumes, for it would take volumes to accomplish them. Like Walt Whitman, the subject is large, and if not exactly seen by all to "contain multitudes," it does include many, many more worthies than a single issue of this or any other journal could begin to do justice to.

What is in the pages that follow, then? A valuable sampling is here. Variety is here. Good writing about good writing is here. Not-widely-enough-known facts are here. New conclusions, connections, and insights are here. And wonder and excitement are here. Because of what these individual contributions themselves are, this issue of *Alabama English* is also direct positive testimony to the achievements of Alabama literature. The bibliographies are extensive. And like the authors or primary works that are their subjects, the articles and essays are lively and engaging, both pleasing and instructive. They exhibit the warm, affecting impact of direct literary experience. And that is very high recommendation of the literature, it seems to me.

No *apriori* pattern, no pre-determined grand scheme, existed for the *Alabama English* you are holding. Although I'm not sure I would have agreed initially, I believe, now that I see the result, that this was a wise proceeding. After the fact, certain categories or types, making a pattern of sorts, can be noted.

To begin the preview basically, two enlightening and helpful bibliographies are included, "Listings" or "Checklists," if you will, their "Preliminary" and "Tentative" adjectives making plain just how extensive these vineyards are and how much basic spadework still remains to be done. These latter facts are, I think, re-emphasized by the specific subjects of the two listings—Afro-American writers and writers of children's literature, both especially important groups of authors for us as teachers. Three other pieces in this issue, a poem by Peter Huggins, some prose musings by Eugene Walter and comments about writing by Madison Jones, are direct primary products of three of the state's practicing writers.

While not failing to keep the personally human before us, the authors of three essays employ place, or institution, as their focus—Sue Walker writes informatively about the Gulf Coast; Loretta Burns about Tuskegee; and Thomas Rountree about Hudson Strode's University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa.

Through Ann Boozer's interview we get to visit directly with Elise Sanguinetti. And through a look at their works and/or biography and influences, we meet, or can renew acquaintance with deepened appreciation for, four more individual Alabama writers: Jim Helten is our intermediary for John Beecher, Phil Beidler for Mary Ward Brown, Randall Curb for Andrew Hudgins, and Charles Avinger for Vicki Covington.

Finally, two other essays tend to focus more on a single specific literary work than on individual writer as subject. Elaine Hughes's look at LellaWarren's *Foundation Stone* and Norman McMillan's discussion of James Agee's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* offer, as it happens, a striking critical pairing of the mythic and the personal. In different but complementary ways they make clear the connection between the particular and the universal.

This connection is a vital one. I know I don't have to pull my soapbox out for English teachers, but maybe I can be forgiven a word or two about why I think Alabama writing deserves all of this good attention, why it deserves any attention at all. It is, first of all, truly literature—belletristic productions that are intrinsic tributes to the imaginative power and stylistic skill of their creators, products that have the intellectual, emotional, and aesthetic values we have historically associated with "fine" literature. A second reason is that, for those of us in Alabama or with Alabama still in us, this is *Alabama*, it is *home-grown*, literature. And, though we must be careful not to make excessive claims of artistic value simply because of place or proximity, its "right-hereness" is, I think, a highly consequential if secondary fact.

"Books are the best of things, well used; abused, among the worst," believed Ralph Waldo Emerson. And being Emerson, he did not neglect, of course, to say what that right use was. "Books," he claimed, "are for nothing but to inspire." Now even if you're unwilling to grant Emerson this exclusive purpose, I hope you will concede that it is a most important one. "The theory of books is noble," Emerson had written earlier in "The American Scholar":

> The scholar of the first age received into him the world around; brooded thereon; gave it the new arrangement of his own mind, and uttered it again. It came into him life; it went out from him truth. It came to him shortlived actions; it went out from him immortal thoughts. It came to him business; it went out from him poetry. It was dead fact; now, it is quick thought.

Emerson's purpose in all of these memorable assertions is to remind meek young men in libraries that "Cicero, Locke, and Bacon were only young men in libraries" when they wrote their great works. Emerson's vital reminder is even more effective, I would claim, if we can talk about local individuals in local libraries, if we are speaking of writers from not only a young reader's country or region or even hometown but from his or her very neighborhood.

For young Alabamians, Alabama literature can provide unique inspiration; it can be a means of significant transformation and transcendence. In the "Introduction" to *Clearings in the Thicket: An Alabama Humanities Reader* (1985) Jerry Brown echoes Emerson in speaking directly to this point. ". . . I will stop short of saying that the humanities are Alabama's greatest treasure," he writes.

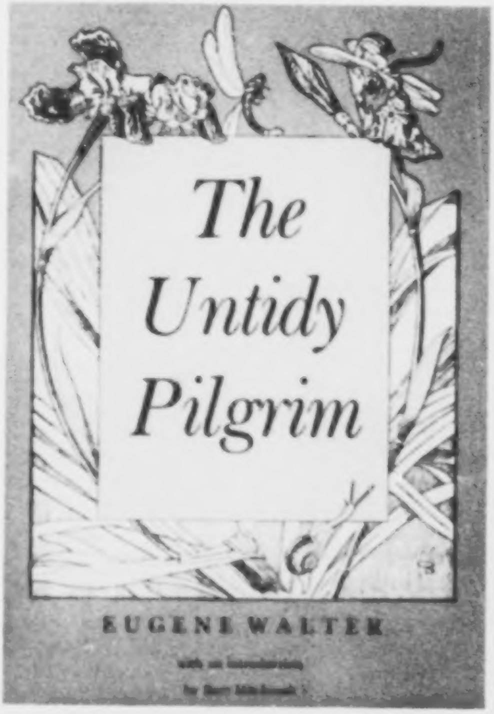
> However, I cannot think of any human pursuit more capable of producing works of beauty, permanence, and value. A tradition that gives us a chance not only to see ourselves in creation but to add to that creation is a cultural legacy worth examining and worth perpetuating. It is especially heartening to see this tradition at work close to home in a clearly visible confirmation of an enduring truth: great literature always begins locally, amidst the confusion of flesh and blood and place. Even the famous works enshrined in classrooms and libraries—the novels of Dostoyevsky and Flaubert, the poetry of Yeats, . . . deal with ordinary people in local settings. . . . Works that begin as intensely local, even provincial, can rise above their particular worlds like full moons, gathering light from one limited source but reflecting it far beyond their own spheres.

But—yes, I know—I'm beginning to sound like a television evangelist. A local guide doesn't tell you, doesn't need to tell you, why and how you should fish; he or she just tries to get you where you can. And that I've done: turn the page, and you're there. Who reads Alabama literature? After you read this issue of *Alabama English*, I'll be surprised if you don't—and disappointed if you don't get others to join you.

Not Like Other People: A Survey of Gulf Coast Literature, 1838-1989

Sue Walker

Sue Walker is Professor of English at the University of South Alabama. She is also the publisher and editor of Negative Capability, *ranked as one of the nation's best literary markets in both poetry and fiction. Recipient of the 1987 Alabama Council on the Arts Individual Writer's Fellowship and author of a book of poems,* Traveling My Shadow, *Walker has published widely in poetry, fiction, and nonfiction markets. She is an advisory editor for* South Coast Poetry Journal *at California State University, Fullerton, California, travels, and gives readings, workshops on writing, and performances of her recent one-woman, one-act play on Madame Le Vert.*



Eugene Walter's *The Untidy Pilgrim*, winner of the 1934 Lippincott Fiction Prize for Young Novelists, calls Mobile "sweet lunacy's county seat." (This book cover is from the Library of Alabama Classics series and has been reproduced with the permission of the University of Alabama Press.)

The Gulf Coast is a literary gumbo—rich and spicy, a regional blend of history and custom, an exuberant dash of women's liberation before Betty Friedan made the "feminine mystique" a household word, a commitment to and a love of place, particularily Mobile, Dauphin Island, Magnolia Springs, and Point Clear in Baldwin County. Mobile as place or state of mind is the roux that is basic to this mix of literary characters and to the predominance of the work produced from and about the area along the coast. In his novel, *The Untidy Pilgrim*, Eugene Walter says that "Down in Mobile they're all crazy, because the Gulf Coast is the kingdom of monkeys, the land of clowns, ghosts and musicians, and Mobile is sweet lunacy's county seat" (11). Annie Shilito Howard in "Incantation," the first chapter of *Old Lace*, her rhapsodic evocation of Old Mobile history, myth, hearsay, and gossip, writes:

> Mobile is more than a place name. It is a long-used vase remembering a thousand fragrant guests; it is an aureole that warms as it brightens; it is a bit of melody, doubly sweet because the audible notes drifting upward are merged with the harmony that turns the stars and beats in the pulses of men. (5)

Julian Rayford, who is said to have been the greatest living authority on the restoration of the folk tale in its original form, wrote in *Cottonmouth* that Mobile was:

> a town like a quick vanishing face at the window—a town not quickly grasped by the newcomer . . . a town asleep . . . but seething in dream, and full of heroes . . . and great figures tramping its swamps . . . stealing down its River . . . passing over its Bay . . . . (8)

The early literature of Mobile and the Gulf Coast deals with history, with the heroes and figures who tramp its swamps and steal down the rivers. Unfortunately much of this early work is out of print and hard to come by. Caldwell Delaney, a leading historian in the area, has preserved the history of Mobile fiction in his book, *A Mobile Sextet*, a collection of papers read before the Alabama Historical Association, 1952-1971. The books themselves are a part of Delaney's private library.

The beginning of the fictionalized true history, according to Delaney, is told in three works: Vic Calvers's "The Shining Towers of El Dorado" about the 1519 Pineda exploration of Mobile Bay, John R. Peavy's "Isabella's Fig Trees" about De Soto's wife, Lady Isabella, who is said to have planted fig trees on Dauphin Island while waiting with the fleet for her husband's return to Mobile, and Andrew Lytle's *At the Moon's Inn*, a novel portraying the destruction by De Soto of Mauvilla, the first Mobile.

Other historical works in Delaney's catalog of early fiction are Mary Catherine Crowley's 1901 novel about Lamothe Cadillac, *A Daughter of New France*; Thomas Costain's *High Towers*, which deals with the history of French Mobile and the Le Moyne family; Paul I. Wellman's *Ride the Red Earth*, about Mobile's Sieur St. Denis; Elizabeth Page's *Wilderness Adventure*, one incident of which is set off Mobile Bay. Page's book is one of the most distinguished American historical novels written about early Mobile. Another book that deals with the French period is Frances Gaither's *The Painted Arrow*, the story of a French boy sent by Bienville to live with the Indians.

According to Delaney, the British Colonial period begins with Vic Calver's story "In The King's Name." In it, a French girl falls in love with a handsome Scot who, in spite of lowering the French flag and running up the Union Jack over Fort Conde, captures her heart and wins her devotion.

Frank G. Slaughter writes of Galvez taking Mobile, of Surgeon Captain John Powers, who, accused of misappropriating funds and court-martialed by Alexander McGillvray, flees Pensacola and arrives in Mobile. The Spanish occupation of the city provides the background for a romance with a young woman whose uncle robbed her of the proceeds of the sale of her plantation on the Perdido (Delaney 43).

The late Spanish-colonial and early American periods of history are covered by Welbourne Kelly's novel about the last years of McGillivray, *Alabama Empire*, by A. B. Meeks's saga of the Fort Mims massacre, *Red Eagle*, and by Robert W. Chamber's short story, "The Rake and the Hussy," which also told the story of Ft. Mims (Delaney 43-44).

Emma Gelders Stern wrote of the Spring Hill and Demopolis Society for the Cultivation of the Vine and Olive in *Some Plant Olive Trees*; Lella Warren wrote of the cotton kingdom and the period of Alabama's plantation life in *Foundation Stone*; and Eloise Liddon, interested in art and culture, described the theatrical life of Mobile in an 1830s novel, *Some Lose Their Way* (Delaney 47-48).

The golden period of Mobile literature, however, began in the 1850s and was highlighted by the work of several remarkable women who set a standard for literary achievement and women's individuation long before the time of women's liberation had come. The impact not only of their talent but of their beauty, glamor, and savoir faire makes the names of Madame Octavia Le Vert[1] (1835-1909), Augusta Evans Wilson (1835-1909), Mary McNeill Fenollosa (1865-1954), Amelie Rives (1863-1945), and Marie Stanley Sheip touchstones of productivity and creative art.

The leading lady of early Mobile literature wrote only one book, *Souvenirs of Travel*, but she set a stage for the arts that may still be without equal. Madame Octavia Le Vert's Monday salon in her palatial Government Street home rivaled those in Paris and brought her national and international recognition and fame. A woman who spoke French, Spanish, and Italian at the age of 12, she was recognized not only for her intellectual accomplishments but also for her amiable disposition, grace, and charm. John C. Calhoun called her "the gifted daughter of the South," and Washington Irving wrote that she was "a woman such as appears but once in the course of an empire" (Delaney 5). Madame Le Vert was the ideal image of an antebellum woman—an example of capable erudition and social grace that made her one of the most acclaimed hostesses of America. In spite of the fact that she produced only one book, two biographies have been written about her: Evelyn Dahl's *Belle of Destiny* and Frances Gibson Satterfield's *Madame Le Vert*, published in 1987, the latter a testimony to the fact that Madame is creating an interest still. Sue Walker's one-woman, one-act play based on Madame Le Vert's life and work will be published in the 1989 *Alalitcom*, the annual collection of award-winning literature published by the Alabama Writer's Conclave, the oldest continuing writers' organization in the United States.

The most famous and successful Alabama novelist of the nineteenth century was Mobile's Augusta Evans Wilson. She excelled in novels of domestic sentimentality which Carl Van Doren, in *The American Novel: 1789-1939*, claims gave America "its most tender, most tearful classics" (106). Although critics question her literary merit today, Wilson is said to have made over a $100,000 from the sale of her works. *Beulah*, the only novel set in Mobile, sold over 20,000 copies within nine months of its publication, and when *St. Elmo* was reissued in 1949, the jacket of the book advertised the printing of over 1,000,000 copies. Certainly Augusta Evans dispelled the traditional view that a woman's place was in the home and that she could not compete with men intellectually or establish a reputation in America.

Like Octavia Le Vert and Augusta Evans Wilson before her, Mary McNeil Fenollosa exhibited a kind of personal flamboyance and a literary talent that made her an interesting character as well a writer of note. An accomplished poet and novelist, she was born in Baldwin County at Sibley Plantation on the old Montgomery Road about one month before the end of the Civil War and grew up in the genteel poverty typical of the Reconstruction days. She began writing early but, at first, her pen was only a pastime. She eloped at 18, had a son, and was a widow at 20. Four years later, a young man whom she had loved before her first marriage, wrote from his consular post in Japan and asked her to marry him. Mary accepted, took her young son, and set out from New Orleans on the boat. When she returned to Mobile for the birth of her second child, a daughter, her second marriage had ended, and she soon divorced. But the years in Japan established a love of the Orient that would significantly influence the rest of her life. At 30, she married the curator of the oriental collection of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the leading oriental scholar of his day, Ernest Fenollosa. The couple returned to live in Japan at Kobinata in the suburbs of Tokyo. It was there, with her husband's encouragement, Mary wrote her first important work, a volume of verse entitled *Out of the Nest,* an immediate success in 1899 when it was published. "Japan—After Absence" expresses most cogently Mary McNeil Fenollosa's attachment to her adopted home and exhibits the rather pensive, floral style of her poetic work:

O lovely land that I
  have loved too long,
And found at each
  returning yet more dear,
I in despite of love,
  have done thee wrong
In half forgetting that
  thou wert so fair.
Yield me forgiveness
  now in gift of song,
The such as birds and
  brooks and sea-pines wear,
That I, in singing
  may my love proclaim
And link with my home-land
  thy cherished name.
. . . .
I love my own dear
  people and my land
My little home beneath
  the Southern skies;
Yet I have friends
  who do not understand,
And souls that look at me
  through alien eyes.
Here, in this foster-country,
  I can stand
As one who needs
  no armor or disguise,
All are my kin; their thoughts
  and mine are close
As petals round one
  golden-hearted rose. . . .

The other work Mary Fenollosa was writing simultaneously was *Truth Dexter,* the novel that her husband suggested she write to overcome her longing for home. Without thought of publication, she told the story of an Alabama girl in Boston. When Little Brown decided upon publication, the material was considered too explicit for a well-bred woman of the day, and the author was given the pen name, Sidney McCall. *Truth Dexter* was a literary and social sensation, and safe behind her masculine pseudonym, Mrs. Fenollosa collected $50,000 in royalities.

Three years passed before Fenollosa began a second novel, and she and Ernest returned to Mobile where they set up residence in Spring Hill and built a second Kobinata—Little Sunshine Hill. It is here that they began to assemble their collection of art and to create an Oriental garden with the first Formosa azaleas seen in America.

With *The Dragon Painter,* Sidney McCall and Mary Fenollosa become one, as Mobile's glamorous novelist won a $10,000 prize from *Collier's Magazine.* The Japanese actor, Sessue Hayakawa, won his first fame in the title role when the book was later made into a motion picture.

Fenollosa's third novel *Red Horse Hill* marked her entrance into a new literary genre, that of social criticism. She attacked child labor in the cotton mills of the South. This book, later portrayed on the screen, cast Ethel Barrymore in the leading role. But Mary Fenollosa's major interest was no longer writing. It became the completion and publication of her late husband's life work, the great *Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art*. Its publication in England brought her into the company of Ezra Pound, who agreed to edit the mass of material that the Fenollosas had collected on the Noh theater. Pound later produced three volumes from their compilation of notes. An influential woman of the world in culture and literature, Mary McNeil Fenollosa died at the age of 89 at her daughter's home in Baldwin county, leaving an indelible stamp on the literary history of Mobile.

Amelie Rives, another flamboyant Mobilian, became a princess as well as a playwright and novelist of note. It is said that she threw Victorian convention to the wind by driving horse-drawn street cars wildly down Government Street. A recluse by day, except for walking her white collie in the afternoon, she was a showy figure at night, attending dances and attracting the attention of eligible young men.

Rives's first story was published in *The Atlantic Monthly* under a pseudonym when Rives was only 17 years old. The editor commented about the story: "The man who wrote this will never do anything stronger." Her first novel "The Quick or the Dead?" published in *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*, shocked Mobile with its explicit treatment of sexual matters. The heroine, Barbara Pomfret, a representation of Rives, struggled to come to terms with her husband's death, with uncertainty about the will of God, and with a sexual attraction to her husband's brother.

Amelie Rives's life seems as captivating as her fiction. Divorced from her first husband, John Canler, in 1888, she subsequently married Pierre Troubetszkoy, a Russian prince with an international reputation as a portrait painter. Oscar Wilde brought the lovers together as the two most beautiful people at a garden party they were attending. With at least a dozen books as best sellers and four plays produced in New York City, Amelie Rives added royal luster to the archives of literature along the Gulf Coast.

A Mobilian dealing with race relations and causing something of a creative maelstrom was Marie Stanley, or Mrs. Sheip as she was known in Mobile. Like William Faulkner, who published *The Sound and the Fury* one year before her own *Gulf Stream*, came out, Sheip chose to treat miscegenation by dramatizing the emotional problems of Adele, a Negro half-breed, as she attempted to find her place within the social structures of two widely divergent worlds, the world of socially affluent whites in old Spring Hill and the world of the blacks which she likened to the Gulf Stream that never loses its color. The novel traces not only Adele's love affair with her rich and prominent white lover, her pregnancy, and the birth of a daughter whom she refuses to rear because she is black, but also the development of the child, Delly, who grows up to respect and to establish her birthright. When Delly refuses to attend a white college and marries a man of her own race, her mother, heartbroken, commits suicide by walking into the sea.

Gulf Stream is remarkable for its treatment of race relations in 1930 and also for its fidelity of language. Marie Stanley Sheip captures with exactitude the dialect and melodious quality of native speech. Many local proverbs such as "You kain't make soap thicken when de moon's too young" and charms with their directives and magic cures are preserved in this novel. Mobile's reception of the novel, however, was negative. Reviewed favorably in *The New York Times*, particularly for its warmth of treatment and powerfully moving conclusion, locals denied the novel's realism. "Negroes don't commit suicide" was a common remark of the day.

Twentieth-century Mobile continues as a productive center of literature though the outstanding writers are predominately men instead of women. Julian Rayford, Eugene Walter, Roy Hoffman, Winston Groom, Mark Childress, Jay Higginbotham, Terry Cline, B. S. Tillinghast, Franklin Daugherty, Maurice Gandy, and John Craig Stewart are names that come immediately to mind. The women who dominate the literary scene along the coast are Fanny Flagg, Judith Richards, Linda Cline, Patricia Storace, and Vivian Smallwood. Again region is important as setting and state of mind, and most of the authors mentioned have capitalized on the rich blend of custom and dialect, the taste of regional dishes, the balmy breezes that Eugene Walter characterizes as "subtropical." "Mobile is subtropical," he drawls, and for him, the weather has a lot to do with the delineation of character. In fact, it may partially explain Southern temperament and personality.

Julian Rayford (1908-1980) hitchhiked four times across the country trading chants for bread, singing songs about Abe Lincoln, Davy Crockett, and in turn, telling about Mobile, the banana boats along the docks, capturing the natural and intimate speech of the Gulf Coast region, restoring the folk tale as a legitimate and significant genre, and turning legend into art. *The First Christmas Dinner* is a sermon delivered by a black preacher. He tells about the three wise men directing a free Christmas feast in Bethlehem. Everyone is invited as one fat wise man gives instructions for making ambrosia—with pecans and peeled grapes in addition to the coconut, oranges, bananas, diced apples, peaches, apricots, pineapples, and splash of lemon juice added to sharpen the flavor. The bakery man says "Lawd, man! That sound just like the old-timey ambrosia we use' to make in south Alabama" (19).

Rayford's *Whistlin' Woman and Crowin' Hen* is a compilation of stories and legends that come from the fishermen and folks of Dauphin Island, Bayou la Batre, Coden, Cedar Point, Heron Bay, Portersville Bay, and Mississippi Sound. Not only is nuance of language captured with authenticity, but the description of the town of Bayou la Batre is one of the finest examples of descriptive writing in American literature.

William March, (1894-1954) one of the most illustrious figures along the Coast, wrote *The Bad Seed* in his apartment on Conti Street overlooking Barton Academy's playground. He said he used to sit at the window and often watch the little girls at play. In his novel *Come in at the Door*, later published as *Desire and Damnation*, he changed the name Mobile to "Bayport" at the last minute and laughed that he missed making one change. Although March spent much of his life as a recluse, his heart was in Mobile, and in *The Looking Glass*, he describes something of the society life of

Best known for *The Bad Seed*, William March (1893-1954) also wrote prize-winning short stories and probably America's most powerful World War I novel, *Company K* (1933). Alistair Cook called March "the unrecognized genius of our time," "a whole ionosphere above Faulkner." (Photo courtesy of Read Alabama!)

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which he was briefly a part.

Judith Richards and Terry Cline live and write in Fairhope, Alabama. Although Terry Cline's books *Damon, Death Knell, Mindreader, Missing Persons, The Attorney Conspiracy,* and *Quarry* are removed from the Gulf Coast in both setting and theme, *Cross Current* begins in Mobile. *Prey* has a character who is from the city though the novel is set in Thomasville. Judith Richards, Terry Cline's wife, has written a novel, *Summer Lightening,* based on Cline's childhood. It is set in Florida in the early 1940s. Richards's *Sounds of Silence* and *Triple Indemnity* are set in Mobile.

Linda Cline's *The Miracle Season,* a book that deals with the incidence of genius in animals, also has a local terrain. Its characters are a crow, a raccoon, four armadillos who have the collective intelligence of one, and a rattlesnake named Adam.

Fanny Flagg's first novel *Coming Attractions: A Wonderful Novel,* although fictionally set in Mississippi, is actually about the years Fanny, then Pat Neal, attended Foley High School and lived at Gulf Shores, Alabama. One journal entry in the book tells about the heroine, Daisy Fay Harper, when she joined the Rainbow Girls. She and her friend Pickle sneak five sand crabs each into the meeting and drop them at strategic stations on their journey to the end of the rainbow. Daisy Fay is thrown out, and Pickle tells her they won't be accepted into the Order. "She made me so nervous," Daisy Fay writes "that I backed into a gas heater in the hall and my net dress caught on fire" (228). She runs and a block away discovers that she is standing in front of the Magnolia Springs Bakery in her underwear and comments that "there isn't a man in Harwin County that hasn't seen me half naked" (229). Harwin County, of course, is a thinly disguised Baldwin County of which Magnolia Springs is actually a part. Those who know Fanny Flagg, who were Rainbow Girls, and who went to school with her recognize and remember much of what happened in the book. Flagg's preface states that "What you are about to read . . . really did happen to me . . . or maybe it didn't . . . I'm not sure . . . but it doesn't matter . . . because it's true . . . ." Finally, in the last entry in the book, September 3, 1959, Daisy Fay says:

> I'm all packed. I leave for Atlantic City in the morning. I don't know what's going to happen to me, or if I will ever come back, but I do owe a lot of people a lot of things and I promise I won't come back until I'm somebody.
>
> And I won't. (320)

Flagg told the truth about that too. She recently bought a home in Magnolia Springs, and with the success of her second novel, *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe* and her previous television, stage, and movie acclaim, she's *somebody.*

Mark Childress was living in Magnolia Springs when he wrote his second novel, *V for Victor.* It begins: "Think of a place in the heart of nowhere. A place made of water, the sky, a salt marsh. Not much else. Trees, a boat. A boy of sixteen with a dangerous imagination" (5). That boy is Victor; the time is 1942, and a German U-Boat threatens the coast. Enemy agents infiltrate Victor's Magnolia Springs, nearby Weeks Bay, the Gulf, and Victor is caught up in the midst of the intrigue. In terms of fidelity to geographical terrain, one of the finest descriptions of a Jubilee occurs in this novel:

> This bay is the one place on earth where there is a jubilee. That's a natural fact, go to the library and read it yourself. You can go all the way around the world and you won't see a jubilee again unless you come back here.
>
> Jubilee! The word sounded the thrill of early early mornings . . . the

> cry coming into his sleep through the window screen. Before dawn, sometimes, when it was warmest in summer, when the heat killed the wind, then the tide and the moon and water worked out a strange arrangement, the fishes and shrimps and the crabs and the eels and the rays would all swim up from the floor of the bay.
>
> The water no longer held them. They wanted out. They threw themselves into the shallows, even onto the thin strip of sand, wave after wave of the species marching to the shore . . . . Jubilee! Jubilee! The word spread like fog. Jubilee! (15-16)

John Craig Stewart, who taught at the University of South Alabama before retiring to Brevard, North Carolina, used Mobile as the setting of his novel *The Last to Know* and set many scenes in and around Bon Secour Bay, Point Clear, and Dauphin Island. The novel ends as the eye of Hurricane Frederick passes over west of Mobile: "Everybody knows now what a destructive hurricane Frederick was—over a billion dollars in property loss but, more important, how few lives were lost, due to efficient and rapid evacuation" (179-80).

Roy Hoffman writes of the polarized atmosphere of Alabama in the 1960s and 1970s. Mobile, in his novel, *Almost Family*, is disguised as Madoc, Alabama. Nebraska Waters, a black housekeeper, is a central character in the book and the subject of a literary essay that deals with local custom and with the history of the time. The title of the essay is "A Real Jewish Mother" and in it Benjamin, its author, writes:

> It is clear that Madoc, my hometown, as well as the South, and probably a great deal of the United States owes a debt to Nebraska. I've seen women like her in Texas and Massachusetts, who leave their own children in the morning and do not return to them until night, spending most of their waking hours feeding and doing for their "white children" in the other part of town. Perhaps it is the case that when many of these white children grow up to hurl insults at black people, to vote for politicians who preach white supremacy, and to hire new Nebraskas to wash their dishes and press their children's clothes, they are unconsciously reacting to the Jewish mother of their youth, battling her by hurling the insults at anonymous black people, resenting her by voting for racist politicians, and then asking her back by hiring someone strange who nevertheless looks like her, talks like her. In fact, the white children never really grow up in relation to their Nebraskas. Held in a perpetual state of adolescence—as the relationship between a child and a Jewish mother can never develop beyond interdependence, beyond the child's needing the mother for physical nurturing and the mother's needing the child to nurture—the white adults are really teen-agers reacting to a parent figure. When George Wallace stood in the doorway of the University of Alabama, maybe he was secretly thumbing his nose at the black Jewish mother who had once coddled him on her bosom. (214-15)

It is not surprising that Benjamin's family did not want his essay published in the Morton literary journal.

Other works set in the Gulf Coast area are Jay Higginbotham's novel *Brother Holyfield* that takes its name from the central character, Brother J. Benjamin, the 41-year-old dilettante pastor of the First Baptist Church of metropolitan Bienville (Mobile). Franklin Daugherty's *Postmodern Times* proclaims the Gulf Coast is postmodern. The full range of local life and character—from Lester's Quick Stop Grill on St. Louis Street, and Infant Mystics Mardi Gras Ball at the Municipal Auditorium, and progressive alteration of Spring Hill Avenue by removing the median ("trees and bushes, houses and people, should not get in the way of cars"), to plans for a sprawling shopping mall and biblical amusement park, "Six Flags Over Jesus" (69).

B. S. Tillinghast's *Bridge To Bonito Island* is also set along the coast where real estate values skyrocket and islanders are caught between trying to preserve their sense of community and making a windfall from their land. The bridge of Tillinghast's novel is the one that connects Bonito Island to the western Florida shore.

Following Father Abraham Ryan, Alabama's first Poet Laureate, a number of poets who have achieved national recognition for their work and who have published books of poetry are Maurice Gandy, Patricia Storace, Vivian Smallwood, and Sue Walker. Although Maurice Gandy was born in Ely, Nevada, he has lived in Mobile for a number of years. His book, entitled *An Uncharted Inch* has poems such as "Church Street Cemetery" and "An Old Mobilian" that are specifically related to this area. Patricia Storace is a native Mobilian who now lives in New York City. She is the poetry editor of *The Paris Review* and the author of a collection of poems entitled *Heredity*. Sue Walker, author of *Traveling My Shadow* and *Poems On Assignment*, lives in Mobile and is a professor of English at the University of South Alabama.

Vivian Smallwood is the area's Emily Dickinson. Though her poetry has achieved national recognition, she has not sought to market herself in ways that would bring her the acclaim and reputation that she deserves. Her second book of verse, *And Finding No Mouse There*, presents poems that have won national awards, and it is said that Smallwood is often better at writing sonnets than Edna St. Vincent Millay. Her work deals with archeology, with history, with biblical themes, and with space—both inner and outer—with the nuisance of growing older which she describes in "Senior Citizen," and with death as in "I Shall Pretend To Be Sleeping."

I shall pretend to be sleeping,
just for a day or two,
While living is still a habit
and death is so strange and new.
Propped on my smooth white
pillow under the quilted grass.
I shall pretend to be dreaming,
hoping the dream will pass.

Smallwood's range of theme is impressive, but she, too, does not neglect the area as subject matter and writes of beachcombers and specifically of the "Island In The Bay":

Things come together so.
Our yesterdays,
Our vague tomorrows,
crowd into a space
No larger than this room,
and meet and merge
Directionless as August butterflies.

……

Remember when
the island in the bay
Was small and dim and
half the world away?
Today we see a house,
a clump of trees,
A picket fence we never saw before.
Perhaps we grow
far-sighted with the years;
Perhaps the island too is closing in.
Thank God we are together,
you and I.
Here in our corner,
backs against the wall.
We brush aside the blurred,
untidy wings
That beat against us so,
and when I say,
"The island in the bay
is nearer now,"
You place your hand
a moment on my hand
And do not smile,
because you understand.

No mention of Gulf Coast literature is

complete without mentioning Mobile's Renaissance Man, Eugene Walter. A central figure in the arts throughout Europe, the state, and especially in Mobile, Walter is a novelist, a poet, artist, actor, columnist, editor, and gourmand. He is the author of two culinary volumes: *American Cooking: Southern Style* and *Delectable Dishes From Termite Hall*. The latter reads like a novel and adds dash to the joy of cooking. For example, the section on turkey and chicken begins with a sprinkling of history and a flavorful warning about how to cook the bird that makes its star appearance on Thanksgiving Day. "We are all turkey-conscious these days," Walter says, "but do we know the dear bird? (No, we'd rather accept him without question, and overcook the poor thing into a dry and cardboardy horror)" (25). A chief ingredient in anything Walter writes in joy. He makes a comedy of human weakness and foibles and believes that the best way to cure outrages and ills is by poking gentle fun as opposed to too much high seriousness and outright dripping venom.

To what does Eugene Walter attribute his talent and versatility? His first novel, *The Untidy Pilgrim*, won the Lippincott Prize, his book of verse, *Monkey Poems*, a Sewanee-Rockefeller fellowship, and his story, "I Love You Batty Sisters" in his short story collection *The Likes Of Which*, an O. Henry citation. Eugene Walter says it's because he didn't realize when he grew up that he was ever a child. The ward of Hammond Gayfer, he spent his early years in a large riverfront home that was always a center of creativity. Robert Penn Warren wrote his first book on a card table set up in the chicken house no longer inhabited with fowl, and Conrad Albrizio, the Italian painter, set up his easel on the old front veranda. Young Eugene worked on his marionette theatre and sometimes didn't attend school. By the time he graduated from high school, he was so accomplished in the arts that his lack of physical education credits was ignored, and he was awarded his diploma without them. Numerous prizes won before the age of 18 are testimony of his genius.

Volume 8, Number 4, 1988 of the international literary journal, *Negative Capability*, published in Mobile, is devoted solely to the work of Eugene Walter. It contains interviews with the author and showcases much of his work. Perhaps Walter appropriately sums up the flavor of Gulf Coast in his translation "Je Vien De Ce Pays" printed in this issue.

> We're not like other people, here on the Gulf of Mexico . . . Myself, I'm really not like other people, because I come from this place. Ah!

Note

[1] Dr. Le Vert preferred the Anglicanized spelling of the name: "Levert." Octavia preferred the French touch and therefore spelled their name "Le Vert."

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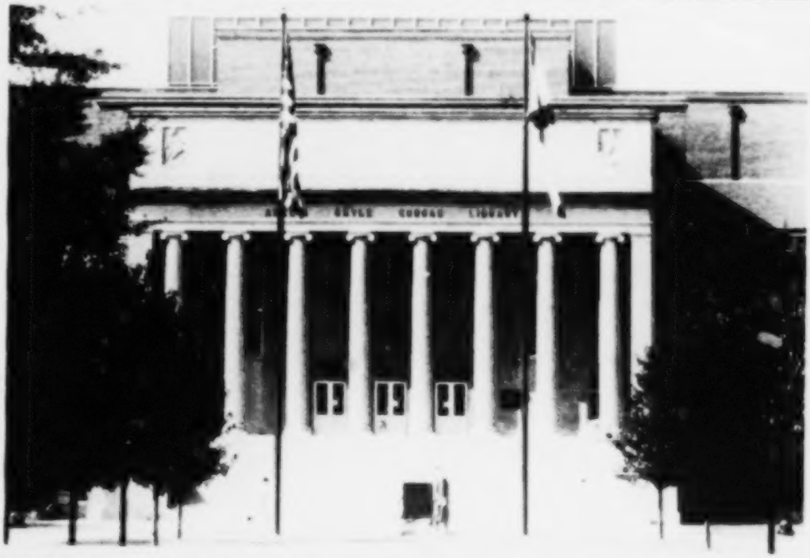
The supe store where Strode's students gathered after class was located in the basement of the Student Union Building, which now houses the School of Communication. (Courtesy of University Relations Photography, University of Alabama)



Strode's creative writing classes met one night a week in the Amelia Gayle Gorgas Library. (Courtesy of University Relations Photography, University of Alabama)

Hudson Strode: the Legend and the Legacy

Thomas J. Rountree

Thomas J. Rountree is Professor of English and former Chair of the English Department at the University of South Alabama. He was a long-time friend of Hudson Strode, first as a student and later as a colleague at the University of Alabama, where he succeeded Strode as Director of the Creative Writing Program. He has taught at universities in Alabama, Louisiana, and Texas; and he has published 60-odd short stories, essays, and poems along with authoring and editing six books on major British and American writers. His Critics on Hawthorne *and* Critics on Melville *were chosen by the U.S. Information Agency for its 1975-76 worldwide Bicentennial Book Exhibition, "Bicentennial, 1776-1976: The Power of Print in American History."*

The publishing achievement of Hudson Strode's creative writing students at the University of Alabama beginning in the late 1930s was a national phenomenon. Strode's work, said a top New York editor, "is the most brilliantly successful of any to be found anywhere." (Photo courtesy of the W. S. Hoole Special Collection Library, University of Alabama Library.)

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"Give me the creative writing program that Hudson Strode has at the University of Alabama," a Texas colleague of mine used to declare, "and I'll turn out as many publishing writers as he does."

Though it never satisfied my self-convinced friend, the answer to such extravagance was obvious and simple. No one *gave* Strode the writing program. Against the odds of academicism and nonprecedence and jealousy, he developed it from the scratch of personal misgivings to the high professionalism of multiple buckram, with one student's novel after another published to national—and sometimes international—acclaim. Because of these novels and the abundance of published and award-winning short stories from his class, during many years the program, along with Strode's own books and public lectures, generated publicity that rivaled or exceeded that of the University's football team.

For me the year 1945 illuminates the point like the laser lights at Disney World. As a teen-age Alabama sailor in California, I did not know that the University even had a football team until people began talking about the upcoming Rose Bowl game. But I had heard faintly of the books being produced on the campus in Tuscaloosa.

Now, that limited knowledge may not be surprising of someone who, in addition to a stuffed and heavy duffel bag, would lug a hardback Webster's dictionary and half a dozen novels from shore to ship across the Pacific. And of course Strode's writing class was not seasonal the way football was supposed to be but never was. Further, the writing experience did not require a full team effort, nor was a win demanded every autumn Saturday.

Still, the facts persist, as obstinate as always. The University granted no scholarships for creative writers; but as 1945 debuted, 10 novels from the class had already been published in the program's initial seven-year span, and several others were destined to see print in the next two years. Each semester 300 people from across the country and as far away as Rome were applying for admission to the class, and during the following year 1,400 requests arrived—all seeking membership in a group limited to 14!

Such demand came from the achievements being spread by word of mouth and by widely published articles in newspapers and magazines. In July 1945 the class was featured in *Time* with the evaluative comment that "the record has an exceedingly successful ring to it." Five years later, while reviewing two new Alabama students' novels, *Newsweek* focused on the teacher and class as "exceptional," comparing the program with others that had developed at universities such as Chicago, Stanford, Iowa, and Columbia (where creative writing had a staff of 10). Recognition among leading editors, critics, and literary agents was perhaps best summed up by Edward Aswell, a top New York editor, who once stated that "Hudson Strode's work is the most brilliantly successful of any to be found anywhere."

According to standard commentary, that work began in September 1936 when Harriet Hassell, a shy girl who lived across the Black Warrior River from Tuscaloosa, finally convinced him to let her try a novel in his short-story writing class, though that teaching effort really became a functional program in 1938 when her *Rachel's Children* was published with strong critical success. But if that was the birth of a new creative mentorship, it had had its prenatal preparation in Strode's earlier life.

Imbued with a love for theater—particularly Shakespeare—during his school days at Demopolis High School, the University of Alabama, and Columbia University, Strode began his long teaching career in 1914 with a two-year stint at Syracuse University before becoming a permanent professor at the University of Alabama. He was already developing a life-long talent for meeting famous people—actors, writers, musicians, dramatists, governmental figures—and in 1915 he published his first short story in *McClure's*.

To supplement his income, during the next several years he turned out other short fictions for popular magazines, gave public dramatic readings from Shakespeare, and wrote book reviews. But after 1923 he did no more fiction, partly because he decided that that was not what he could do best and partly because an editor, rejecting a story and commenting that Strode did not really believe in his fictions himself, suggested that he should perhaps turn to nonfiction. Decades later, however, Strode told me more than once that at one point in the 1920s he decided to write a Southern novel or screenplay or possibly both. Although the project never materialized and he never in fact wrote a novel, his planning to write one and particularly his success in publishing short stories in America and England were unrecognizedly yet surely developing an expertise for this eventual mentor to fiction writers. Such instructional genesis, though, was not limited to this single and (in hindsight) obvious influence.

From the start of his professorship at Alabama, Strode was a special teacher of Shakespeare. The class was a popular but demanding one. While it required close outside reading of criticism such as A. C. Bradley's famous essays, it was all theater-quality dramatic reading laced with commentary when the bell rang. It was a one-man production, and an excellent one whereby characters from Cleopatra to Othello and beyond came to life for the listeners. Its decades of campus-wide renown are reflected even today by the fact that Bernerd Weber, himself a preeminent Alabama history professor now retired, calls it a major regret that he never took Strode's Shakespeare class.

It was a masterly presentation that managed to elucidate Shakespeare's plots, themes, and style though dramatic character renderings predominated. Having taken the class myself and also accompanied Strode as backstage help for public dramatic readings, I had occasion to sense a degree of evolution in his interpretation of characters, for he was a keen student of what he was doing. And I am convinced that, before and during his years as a teacher of fiction writing, the constant concern with unifying elements like plot and especially the year-after-year "becoming" of Shakespeare's great variety and stratification of characters contributed to Strode's outstanding critical empathy with and understanding of the diversity and needs of his students' fiction.

In the meantime another major contributory medium was progressing in its own right. During 1929 to recover from severe strain on his nerves and eyes, Strode and his wife, Thérèse, went to Bermuda, where they lived for three years and where he wrote his first travel book, *The Story of Bermuda* (1932). It was the first of 17 books that he would publish before his death in 1976, and it remained in print for more than 20 years, going ultimately into eight printings. Through the 1930s and following decades he would publish eight other travel books on lands such as Finland, Mexico, Sweden, Denmark, and the Far East, each one written in graceful, researched, and firsthand detail about the people, their history and locale, and their twentieth-century world status. While his volume on South America, *South by Thunderbird* (1937), proved to be his most popular seller, each book demonstrates that, as he once said, he always traveled expectantly.

For more than a dozen years in the 1950s and 1960s, his nonfiction writing took an important new direction as he researched and traveled extensively to produce his definitive three-volume biography of Jefferson Davis. He came to believe that this was his most significant contribution as an author, and time seems already to be proving him correct. Nonetheless, his widest influence to date was his impact on aspiring writers of fiction, a classroom realm where his private nonfiction industry could sustain a realistic but sympathetic professionalism to prod and comfort students. For he knew the immense amount of isolated work, the genuine doubts and felt triumphs, the sometimes trauma, and the hope involved in writing a book to final completion.

By the second half of the 1930s, then, the secret ministry of gestation had been at work in at least these three primary capacities—his successes with the short story, with Shakespeare, and with nonfiction books. He was more prepared for a new teaching venture than he knew when Harriett Hassell came to him and his first reaction was that novel writing could not be taught. Proving himself to be wrong was paradoxically going to become one of the greatest satisfactions that any mentor can experience.

Gratification began when Hassell's *Rachel's Children* (1938) was published by Harper's and went into five printings, garnering close-to-rave reviews in the New York *Times* and *Herald Tribune*. This was followed in 1940 with the release of Helen Norris's *Something More Than Earth* and Gerrie Thielens's *Awake! My Heart*. In 1941, before he was 21, Edward Kimbrough published *From Hell to Breakfast* and began teaching creative writing classes preliminary to Strode's. Progress quickened so that in almost any given year one to four novels would appear by Strode-taught writers. At the same time students were winning national short-story contests and publishing in such magazines as *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Mademoiselle*, and *The Saturday Evening Post*, with a significant number of the stories being reprinted in the annual *Best Short Stories* and *O. Henry Prize Stories*. Four students, along with Strode himself, became recipients of Rosenwald Fellowships for their work. But the signalizing candle on the whole cake during much of the 1940s was perhaps Lippincott Publishers' awarding an annual $1,000 prize for the best novel submitted from Strode's class.

This kind of classroom achievement lasted for an even 25 years, and while outsiders often thought that it was a matter of luck or modern magic, in actuality no secret formula existed beyond the inspiring and directional magnetism of Strode himself. First, of course, a student had to have talent and the urge to realize it; and those are mostly subliminal things. A long-persistent story at the University was that, when student Borden Deal was asked why he could write so glowingly about the back-breaking work of picking cotton by hand, he replied, "That's so I won't have to pick it." It was a good, deflective response to the question of aspiration, which can hardly formulate its sources. But coupled with writing talent, it could get its fully exercised chance in the writing class.

The group met six hours each week (three of them on Monday night) in a seminar room on the third floor of the library where two tables made a T. Strode would arrive with his genteel lope, leather briefcase in hand, his hair combed back, impeccably groomed in his thin mustache, one of his dozens of bow ties, and a sport coat of raw silk or fine wool—a real contrast, according to his wife, to a carelessness of attire in his early years. He sat at the middle top of the T, with the students in assigned seats around the tables. He might begin with some development in the literary world or a success by one of the students or a critical comment for a recent reader, but mostly each meeting was devoted to a critical listening to one or two students' short story or chapter in progress.

Everyone was supposed to make notes, and when a person had finished reading, the critical suggestions or questions began either with the students or with Strode, who always summed up. Readers were not allowed to defend their work. They were to absorb and consider all the comments, but it was entirely up to them whether or not and how they would use the comments in making revisions.

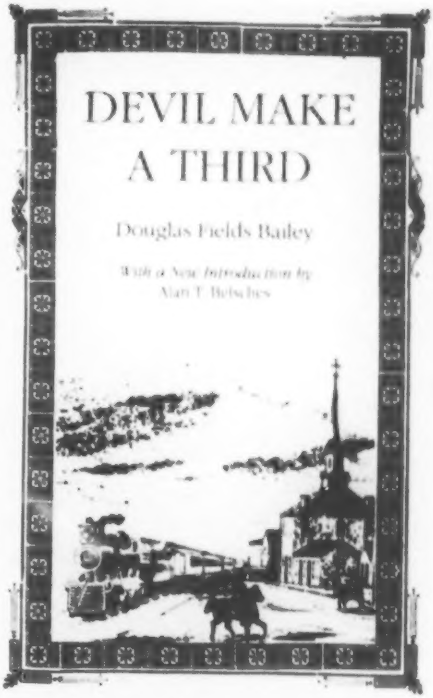
The criticism could be as gentle as a zephyr or as abrupt as a thunder clap. Strode once told a faculty wife in the class not to read again until she had developed a conflict for her characters, though another time he would be mild and complimentary, pointing out to a surprised novice that his or her writing rhythm was iambic. Either way, it was unsettling to hear one's literary offspring criticized. Many felt like copying Robert Gibbons, an excellent writer whose first novel *Bright Is the Morning* (1943) won the Knopf Fellowship for Fiction. Reportedly when the multiple commentary began, he ducked his head and gradually slid lower and lower in his chair, saved from the floor only by the ending of the hour.

Like the writing, the criticism would be as varied as the backgrounds of the people in the room. A compositely typical class would include a Navaho from Arizona, a blueblooded scion from Virginia, a citizen of California or Connecticut, a plainsman from Nebraska, and inevitably, it seemed, someone from Mississippi. They would also be there from Alabama cities such as Birmingham or Montgomery and from tiny communities like Pansey or Pinckard. One might be a former newspaper editor from Mobile, another a former State Department employee working abroad. Some had military experience—for instance, former sailor Robert Bowen, who after the fall of the Philippines spent most of World War II in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp and whose *The Weight of the Cross* (1951) was possibly the best novel that came from that facet of the war. Another might be sustaining his writing effort by stocking shelves in a supermarket, as did Carlyle Tillery, who for the year of his *Red Bone Woman* (1950) was picked as one of the 10 most promising new writers in America. Beyond question each reader in class got a crossfire of response that could correct doubtful details and would lead one to envision and allow for a broad reading audience. Often enough, through Strode's arrangement, noted writers, editors, and publishers visited the class. Among these were Sigrid Undset, Carl Sandburg, Alfred Knopf, and Harold Latham, the editor who discovered Margaret Mitchell and *Gone With the Wind*. On occasion the mentor would invite a few class members to tea at his home to meet houseguest Aldous Huxley or perhaps Cecil Scott, editor at Macmillan. These encounters added to the professional atmosphere that Strode wanted his students to feel and know, an enlargement wherein writing was the most important thing in the world.

After the long Monday night session, a good number from the class would gather for coffee someplace like the snack bar in the Union Building's supe (supply) store. There they discussed each other's efforts in the context of stylists such as Hemingway, Joyce, and Updike. They speculated about symbolism, the writing market, and a recent visitor to class. They lamented, told stories on themselves, and struggled with one-upmanship. But through it all was a sense of the master (as some liked to call him) directing traffic at the crossroads of their excitement.

Most made the crossing successfully, and many verified it with their publications. Doug Bailey, a Dothan businessman, was so determined to write a novel that he would go several miles from town to Kelly Springs where the ice-cold water from the pool's underground springs invigorated him when he was not in the solitude of writing in a leased rustic cabin. On Mondays he traveled 200 miles to Tuscaloosa to take his place in the writing class. His well-received *Devil Make a Third* (1948) is now available again as one of the Library of

Alabama Classics republished by the University of Alabama Press.



Among the novels Hudson Strode influenced into print was Douglas Fields Bailey's *Devil Make a Third* (1948), based on Bailey's family and Wiregrass Alabama history. (This book cover is from the Library of Alabama Classics series and has been reproduced with the permission of the University of Alabama Press.)

Anniston's Elise Sanguinetti, a writer of wit and depth, has produced four prominent novels and finished a fifth. She dedicated *McBee's Station* (1971) to Hudson Strode, and her first novel, *The Last of the Whitfields* (1962), is now one of the Library of Alabama Classics.

John Craig Stewart, an Alabamian all the way until his retirement and move to North Carolina, has published three novels along with nonfiction books. His many short stories and articles have appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly, American Mercury, The Saturday Evening Post,* and other magazines. His excellent first novel, *Through the First Gate* (1950), deserves to be among the Library of Alabama Classics.

By 1955 Thomas Hal Phillips of Mississippi had authored five successful novels beginning with *The Bitterweed Path* (1950); and in 1952 when his third novel appeared, *Time* described him as one of two writers most likely to succeed Faulkner, Wolfe, and Fitzgerald. After *The Loved and the Unloved* came out in 1955, Hollywood lured him so that he began dividing his writing time and locale between Los Angeles and a truck stop in northeast Mississippi. He turned out a number of Tarzan scripts and other screenplays such as *A Place to Come To* for Robert Redford. His writing, producing, and consulting assignments include *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman, Ode to Billy Joe,* and *Nashville,* which was nominated for five Academy Awards.

It seems beyond doubt, however, that Borden Deal was Strode's most prolific fiction writer. By the time of his recent death, he had published well over a score of novels like *Dunbar's Cove* (1957), *Dragon's Wine* (1960), *The Tobacco Men* (1965), *The Winner* (1973), and *There Were Also Strangers* (1986); and his many short stories were printed in *The Saturday Evening Post, Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine,* and other periodicals. Some of these works became the bases for television and

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movie productions, while frequent novels were translated into most of the major languages of the world. Due in part to his anonymously published but enormously popular "pronoun novels" of erotica (*Her, Him, Us,* and *You*) under the Bantam Books imprint, he reportedly became a millionaire. And though he came from Mississippi and lived variously in Mexico, Jamaica, and Florida, he can also be called an Alabamian because of the years when he lived in the state where he had earlier studied fiction writing.

A mere list of continued achievers among Strode-taught writers would include Lonnie Coleman (a score of books), Robert Gibbons, Jonreed Lauritzen, Hilary Milton, Helen Norris, Gerrie Thielens, and numerous others. But not all directed their later major creativity toward novels. James Daniels became a writer for Huntsville's Redstone Arsenal (later NASA) where part of his duties involved writing and directing official movies. When he rose to be Assistant to the Administrator of NASA in Washington, DC, he also served as project manager for the artifacts that our astronauts left behind on the moon. David Akens became the official historian at the Redstone Arsenal, wrote a book on astronaut John Glenn, and founded a flourishing publishing house. Though his authors came from various states, he was particularly instrumental in encouraging and publishing good Alabama writers, and he was the original motivating force for today's immensely popular Alabama Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville.

Others who might be called "second-generation" mentors combined their own writing with the profession of teaching writing, among them Robert Bowen at the universities of Montana and Alaska, Ed Kimbrough at Colorado State, Robert Ramsey at the University of Arizona, and John Craig Stewart at the University of Alabama and later at the University of South Alabama where he founded the Creative Writing Program. Still others were like me, continuing with short fiction but turning more and more to nonfiction.

A rough estimate of the number of books done by Strode-taught students would now approach 100. If one could make an exact count that encompassed nonfiction, the total might well stretch toward 200. But there is an additional perspective. While former fiction-writing students of mine have published several books, other "second-generation" teachers have had longer runs and more success. If these efforts were included, the numbers would begin to look like a geometric progression stemming from Strode's writing program.

After the classroom fact, different ones have centered the success of the class in Strode himself, speaking or writing of his high professional skill, his magnetic inspiration, his creative drive. I would add to those features his seemingly unbounded confidence in both himself and his students, a personality trait that stimulated a cautious confidence in fledgling writers about their ability to develop.

Dr. Strode would carry that attitude as helpfully forward as possible. When he went to England in 1938, he took along a manuscript copy of Harriet Hassell's *Rachel's Children* and sold it to a publisher who brought it out in Britain a little before it appeared in the United States. Once when I asked him to look at a story that I was too shy to read in class, he immediately sent it with a recommendation to *The Atlantic Monthly.* Although the editors' vote edged against it as "too small-town," his help and faith seemed justified when two versions of the story were published later in two different magazines, one slick and one quality. When he had confidence in any student's piece of writing, he would not hesitate to recommend an agent or publisher and write a supporting letter.

Perhaps it was this personal confidence coupled with Strode's unabashed attraction toward the famous that led Borden Deal not only to laud him as a teacher but also to call him a snob, an assessment with which some others would agree. To a much lesser degree I might here or there concur, but my diminishment is based on specific experience. Like all of Strode's graduate assistants, I had additional opportunities that most did not have. When in the 1950s I followed him to New York to help with his research on Jefferson Davis, I was invited along with him to the Berkshires as weekend houseguest at the home of the Albert Spaldings, a mountaintop estate that the famed violinist had near Great Barrington. In New York, though I spent most of my time typing in the Public Library, I had the luck to join him for dinner at the apartment of Amy Loveman, editor for *The Saturday Review of Literature* and first woman judge of the Book-of-the-Month Club. She had also invited Renaissance specialist Marchette Chute and English novelist Jan Struther, whose *Mrs. Miniver* had been the best seller in Britain during World War II. In addition to meeting a number of editors, I accompanied him for tea with Egyptologist Madame Natasha Rambova, the first wife of silent-movies star Rudolph Valentino. My point in reviewing all this is that most of these people were not mere acquaintances of Dr. Strode. They were his friends, who liked and admired him as a professional equal. When he mentioned them in conversation with others, he was not just dropping names.

No, his friendship with the famous and with royalty (he was knighted by the king of Sweden in 1961) was simply one of the natural and professional traits of a remarkable man who had the courage and good sense to accept his own bent and ability, giving them masterly development—as a writer of very successful travelogues and biography, as a dramatic teacher of Shakespeare, and, perhaps above all, as a renowned pioneer in the teaching of fiction writing.

In retrospect I see more clearly now the response which I should have offered my obstinate Texas friend but which in fraternal safety I could not do: "If you want to turn out all those publishing writers, don't ask to be given another person's program. Instead, ask someone to make you a Hudson Strode."

But that making, of course, is seldom done, and not by one of us.

Voices and Visions from a Land Most Strange: Tuskegee's Literary Heritage

Loretta S. Burns

Loretta S. Burns received her BS degree from Tuskegee University, her MA from Ohio State University, and her PhD from the University of Michigan. She has studied at Columbia University, Yale University, and the Sorbonne. She has received fellowships from the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, the Mellon Foundation, the University of Michigan, and the National Endowment for the Humanities, and she has published articles and delivered papers on American literature and folklore. She has taught at Fisk University and the University of Florida. Currently, she is Professor of English at Tuskegee University. She has been appointed a 1989-90 fellow at the Mary Ingraham Bunting Institute of Radcliffe College.

Macon County and in particular Tuskegee have been fertile fields for literary expression, and pervading much of this literature has been the influence of Tuskegee University. The county, city, and college have nurtured, inspired, and provoked a number of writers, some of whom have felt an almost mystic—albeit ambivalent—attachment to the region. These writers have carried the region with them, not as a sentimental pastoral remembrance, but as a mythical abstraction that forever alters and informs their sense of place and their perception of reality.

Although Tuskegee University, founded in 1881, began as a vocational and technical institute and has received considerable acclaim for its accomplishments in the natural, social, and applied sciences, it has a literary heritage as well, going back many years. Booker T. Washington's *Up from Slavery*, published in 1901, is a brilliant example of its genre. Its purpose was not only to chronicle Washington's rise from poverty and ignorance to the presidency of Tuskegee, but to inspire in blacks values of hard work, thrift, and service to others and to encourage white philanthropic support for Tuskegee. These threads are woven together masterfully. Hence, as Arthur P. Davis and Saunders Redding note, the work may be viewed both as "the sincere work of a dedicated and unpretentious man," and "a superb job of salesmanship by a master of the art" (152). Houston A. Baker, Jr. concludes that *Up from Slavery* is both autobiographical and fictive:

> *Up from Slavery* . . . stands as a verbal structure that compels our attention. If it falsifies details of the journey, it promises much for our understanding of the voyage into language. The wholeness of the self, the self as public man, the autobiographical self engaged in fictive discourse—these, too, represent attempts to find terms for order in a complex world.
>
> The culturally unique aspects of *Up from Slavery* reside . . . at a level of

> functional oppositions. . . . [T]he disparity is between a graphically depicted hell of rural, impoverished, illiterate black southern life and an intriguingly displayed heaven of black southern urbanity, thrift, and education. Two distinct modes of discourse sustain this opposition—the autobiographical self exists in the former, while the fictive self lives in (and testifies to the possibility of) the latter. (52)

However *Up from Slavery* is interpreted, it remains one of the most engrossing autobiographical accounts in American letters.

During the same time period in which *Up from Slavery* was published, well-known poet Paul Laurence Dunbar, after a visit to Tuskegee, was asked by Booker T. Washington to write a song for the school. Dunbar wrote "The Tuskegee Song," an admiring piece in which he refers to the school as "thou pride of the swift growing South," and "a gem in the fairest of lands," viewing its struggles and triumphs in the context of the strivings of the black race. The song has remained the University's anthem.

For some writers, even brief associations with Tuskegee made lasting impressions. In his second autobiography, *I Wonder as I Wander*, Langston Hughes describes his visit to Tuskegee during a tour of black colleges in the 1930s. He notes his delight at being invited to Tuskegee, remembering how his grandmother carried him as a child to a packed auditorium to hear Booker T. Washington speak and recalling how deeply moved he had been, later, when he read *Up from Slavery*. He describes being greeted warmly by President Robert Russa Moton and being shown George Washington Carver's laboratories by the great scientist himself. His most poignant memory of the visit, however, involves an anecdote recounted by Dr. Moton:

> Dr. Moten [sic] said that once, returning from a vacation in the North, he had to change trains at Atlanta to board a Jim Crow car for Tuskegee. From New York to Georgia he had traveled as a first-class passenger. When he stepped from his Pullman to the platform in the early morning at the Atlanta station, . . . he heard a scream behind him. He turned and saw that a woman stumbled at the top step of the coach and was falling forward. Naturally, his first impulse was to reach out his arms and catch her. But when he looked up and saw that she was white, he dropped his arms.
>
> The student audience in chapel roared with laughter. Every one of those Tuskegee students knew that for a black man—and Dr. Moten [sic] was very black—to catch a white woman in his arms in Georgia might mean a lynching. Naturally, he dropped his arms, and the woman landed head-first on the platform. But, at least, she did not have a chance to cry, "Rape!" The irony of [his] split-second dilemma amused Tuskegee students greatly. But somehow I could not laugh. It seemed to me one of the saddest stories I had ever heard. (61)

(Hughes then describes his visit to nearby Kilby prison to read some of his poetry to the Scottsboro Boys.)

Down through the years many other writers have been associated with Tuskegee in a variety of ways. For example, at least two writers who participated in the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s attended Tuskegee: Claude McKay and George Wylie Henderson. McKay wrote poems, novels, reports of sociological studies, and autobiography. Two of his best-known works are *Harlem Shadows*, a volume of evocative, sometimes powerful poetry, and a novel depicting Harlem night life, *Home to Harlem*, which received the Harmon Gold Award medal. George Wylie Henderson, who was born in Alabama

OLLIE
OLLIE MISS
GEORGE WYLIE HENDERSON

George Wylie Henderson left Tuskegee and Macon County to become a part of the famed New Negro, or Harlem, Renaissance of the 1920s and 1930s. His book *Ollie Miss* (1935), called by Lee Green "one of the period's literary gems," was followed by a sequel, *Jule*, in 1946. (Photo of Henderson courtesy of Read Alabama! Book cover is from the Library of Alabama Classics series and has been reproduced with the permission of the University of Alabama Press.)

and grew up in Macon County, studied printing at Tuskegee before moving to New York City. Henderson's novel *Ollie Miss* was first published in 1934 and was reprinted in 1988 by the University of Alabama Press. Set in Macon County, it is the story of a black woman's love for one man and her search for selfhood and fulfillment. In his introduction to the re-issue, Blyden Jackson says "no history of the Harlem Renaissance should be without it" (xix).

More recently in Tuskegee's literary history, Blyden Jackson—an acknowledged authority on the Afro-American novel—poets Melvin Tolson, Samuel Allen (Paul Vesey), and Rita Dove have held appointments at the University as visiting faculty or writers-in-residence. Rita Dove, who was writer-in-residence in 1981-82, won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 1987 for *Thomas and Beulah*, a collection of poems loosely based on the migration of her maternal grandparents from the rural South to Akron, Ohio. Dove's appointment at Tuskegee, like that of Blyden Jackson, was supported by the Portia Pittman Fellowship program, named in honor of the daughter of Booker T. Washington.

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But of all the writers who have been associated with Tuskegee over the years, perhaps the two who have been most influenced by that association (aside from Booker T. Washington) are Albert Murray and Ralph Ellison, two kindred spirits.

Albert Murray was born in Nokomis, Alabama, on May 12, 1916, and spent his early years in Mobile. He received his BS in 1939 from Tuskegee and returned to teach composition and literature and to direct the theater from 1940 to 1943 and from 1946 to 1951. In 1943 he joined the Air Force, from which he retired as a major in 1962. He received his MA from New York University in 1948 and has studied at several other universities, including the University of Michigan and the University of Chicago. He was the O'Connor Professor of Literature at Colgate University in 1970 and 1973 and writer-in-residence at Emory University in 1978. He has also taught at Columbia University and the University of Massachusetts in Boston and has lectured widely.

Murray has written persuasively on Afro-American culture, arguing that those who focus on blacks as victims ignore the heroic modes of life and expression Afro-Americans have created. In *The Omni-Americans: New Perspectives on Black Experience and American Culture, The Hero and the Blues*, and other works, he views the blues form as a vehicle for coping with the harshness and absurdity of life. In this scheme, the blues musician becomes heroic in his willingness to confront adversity and his refusal to be undone by it. Murray notes that the blues hero, in his ability to improvise and therefore to respond according to the situation, "is perhaps the most comprehensive as well as the most sophisticated archetype of the 'successful' individual. Indeed, in a very fundamental sense he seems to begin where all other storybook heroes end. In fact, it is as if he were born with a functional awareness of that which it takes the others a lifetime to learn" (*Hero* 98). The blues, says Murray, may be compared to ancient tragedy in that "it would have the people for whom it is composed and performed confront, acknowledge, and proceed in spite of, and even in terms of, the ugliness and meanness inherent in the human condition. It is thus a device for making the best of a bad situation" (*Hero* 36).

Murray's *Train Whistle Guitar*, a fictionalized account of his boyhood, won the Lillian Smith Award for Southern Fiction in 1974. This novel continues the autobiographical impulses begun in *South to a Very Old Place*. Published in 1971, this work is an account of Murray's travels from New York and New Haven to the South—to Greensboro, Atlanta, Tuskegee, Mobile, and through New Orleans, Greenville, and Memphis. As he travels, Murray recalls his early years as he journeyed from Mobile to

Albert Murray
TRAIN
WHISTLE
GUITAR

Train Whistle Guitar (1971), set in Gasoline Point, Alabama, in the 1920s, is a "novel of lyrical reminiscence." Born in Nokomic, Alabama, growing up in Mobile, educated at Tuskegee, Albert Murray is a widely recognized authority on "soul" and the "blues." (Cover design by Ann Twombly; cover illustration by Michael McCurdy. Courtesy of Northeastern University Press.)

Tuskegee to the North. He is not concerned with sociological interpretations; instead, he relies on feeling, instinct, intuition, native curiosity. Stylistically, he combines stream-of-consciousness techniques with the rhythms and other stylistic devices of Afro-American music and the oral tradition.

In the prologue to *South to a Very Old Place* Murray explains that we go home, in a sense, whenever we are thrust back there emotionally or psychologically. He also says that going back is a journey that affirms our sense of place and being, at the same time that it forces us to confront the self and its ancient fears. In *South to a Very Old Place* Murray goes home physically and psychologically in order to experience the past in terms of where he exists in the present. As he travels in search of home, the journey he made years ago becomes a mythic one in search of enlightenment, adventure, destiny, self.

In the section entitled "Tuskegee," Murray conjures up the sights, sounds, characters, and events of his college years, beginning with the old Chehaw Station and evoking the fascination and appeal the train held for Southern blacks: *"The old place you used to come into coming in from Atlanta by railroad was Chehaw, from which you used to take the Chehaw Special on into the campus."* This time, however, he has flown into Montgomery and will take the bus to Tuskegee, but even before the bus ride begins, he starts *"to visualize the old Greyhound ride along US 80 east with the pecan orchards in the distance as you pull out heading for Mount Meigs and Shorter and the once-more-ness of Macon County"* (99; italics Murray's). As the bus approaches Tuskegee, Murray remembers and recaptures the excitement and high expectations surrounding those first journeys there, underscoring their significance by detailing the roads that were taken:

> *That time which was the first time ever, the route they took out of the Beel and the bay sky and moss plus cypress bayou country in the Ford and the Chevrolet was 43 north through Mount Vernon and Grove Hill and then 5 into 22 to pick up 80 out of Selma. But coming back up again in the late summer of that same year to matriculate, it was route 31 by greyhound through Bay Minette and Evergreen and Georgiana and then 80 out of Monkey City. Mister Buster Brown college bound don't you let no-money turn you round. Mister Buster Brown from down in Mobile town. Who if not you Mister Buster Brown? Who else if not who ever Mister Buster Brown? And when else if not whenever and how else if not howsomever and ever Mister Buster Brown?* (100; italics Murray's)

Murray is acutely sensitive to the landscape and built environment—past and present—especially of the Tuskegee campus and environs. In one passage his chant-like naming of buildings transforms them into shrines. The room of a college buddy, Jug Hamilton, is described as a magical place, defying space and time. And "The Block," in Murray's memory, is transformed into an exotic bazaar with an enchantment all its own:

> Not even the mainstem of Sage Hall . . . was as much of a charmed circle as The Block—*especially in the Yardley's English Lavender euphoria of that postgame predance twilight time when happiness was simply being there standing not tall as ofay drugstore squares in their rolled-sleeved open-collared white shirts did, but stashed fly in the gladness of your most righteous threads, whether tweed or hard finished, hanging loose like a blue goose with, say, Lunceford's "Dream of you" on the jukebox for background, until White Hall clock chimed the hour when you would pick up the trillies for the stroll to Logan Hall.* (125; italics Murray's)

Of all the people and places Murray recalls from his college years, an English professor, Morteza Sprague, receives special attention: "But the very special dimension of tuskegeeness you find yourself acknowledging and celebrating above all else this trip back is that post-Booker T. Washington Liberal Arts emphasis which was the very self and voice of Morteza Drexel Sprague" (126). Sprague and Murray shared Auden, Eliot, Pound, Kafka, Kierkegaard—the professor even understood "that your enthusiasm for Thomas Mann's dialectic orchestration went hand in hand with your all-consuming passion for the music of Duke Ellington and Count Basie" (110). Meshing with the mythic framework, Sprague becomes the wise mentor who aids the young hero in his quest, encouraging standards of excellence, evoking the humanistic tradition, and inspiring heroic deeds. By the time of this homecoming, Sprague is dead. Hence, Murray's memories are even more poignant:

> [He] expected you to proceed in terms of the highest standards of formal scholarship among other things not because he wanted you to become a carbon copy of any white man who ever lived. . . . But because to him you were the very special vehicle through which contemporary man, and not just contemporary black man either, would inherit the experience and insights of all recorded or decipherable time. Because to him (as to everyone else on that all-black faculty) your political commitment to specific causes of your people went without saying. . . . To him in those years when no public event, not even an FDR fireside chat, was of more immediate fundamental or comprehensive significance than a Joe Louis fight, there was no question whatsoever that brownskin heroism must of necessity be epical in scope. (132-33)

Indeed, the spirit of Morteza Sprague pervades the entire Tuskegee section.

Among the students Murray conjures up in *South to a Very Old Place* is a music major and lover of books from Oklahoma City named Ralph Waldo Ellison. Ellison was born on March 1, 1914, and in 1933, two years after graduating from Douglass High School, he entered Tuskegee Institute on a music scholarship to study with conductor and composer William L. Dawson. He left Tuskegee in 1936 for New York City, where he met Langston Hughes and Richard Wright, and began to publish feature articles, reviews, and short stories. *Invisible Man*, begun in 1945, was published in 1952 and won the National Book Award. Ellison has published two collections of essays, *Shadow and Act* and *Going to the Territory*. He has been elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters and the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He has served as a trustee of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. In 1970, he was awarded the Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, one of France's highest awards for a writer. In 1969, President Johnson awarded Ellison the Medal of Freedom, this nation's highest civilian honor, and in 1985, President Reagan presented him with the National Medal of Arts. He has taught at Bard College, Rutgers University, and the University of Chicago. In 1970, he was named the Albert Schweitzer Professor of Humanities at New York University—one of the most distinguished academic appointments in the country.

In 1965, 200 prominent authors, editors, and critics, in a *Book Week* poll, selected *Invisible Man* as the most distinguished novel published by an American during the previous 20 years. It is the story of an unnamed young black man's quest to achieve his own identity. Near the beginning of the novel the protagonist dreams that he finds this message inside a briefcase he has been given for graduation: "Keep this Nigger-Boy Running" (33). The hero runs throughout the novel, moving from South to North, coming up against, in his various adventures, people and circumstances that try to define him and deny his humanity. His discovery of his invisibility is prerequisite to his defining himself. The invisible man, through different styles, narrates the story from a hole into which he has retreated. However, in the epilogue he explains that the act of writing and the process of thinking have made him decide to "shake off the old skin and come up for breath" (580).

"The act of writing," Ellison has said, "requires a constant plunging back into the shadow of the past where time hovers ghostlike" (*Shadow and Act* xvi). His years at Tuskegee and in Macon County represent one of the most crucial periods of his life in terms of his artistic development. Ellison, himself, makes this clear: "In time I was to leave the South, although it has never left me, and the interests which I discovered there became my life" (*SA* 129).

The Tuskegee/Macon County influence on *Invisible Man* is perhaps most obvious in Ellison's portrayal of the protagonist's college years. The similarities between the college of the novel and Tuskegee University have been much noted: the physical character of the campus of the "beautiful college" of the novel resembles that of Tuskegee. References to the "Founder," the account of his life, and the statue depicting him lifting a veil from a kneeling slave are all suggestive of Booker T. Washington and Tuskegee. Even before the protagonist describes his college experience, he uses statements and ideas straight out of *Up from Slavery*. But although some readers have viewed Ellison's treatment of the college episodes—especially his portrayals of Dr. Bledsoe, the founder's successor, and Reverend Barbee, the chapel speaker—as a repudiation of Washington's ideas, M. K. Singleton correctly notes that "Ellison's major fictional strategy is . . . to chronicle his hero's . . . misadventures at the hands of assorted exponents of some *distorted variant* of Washington's credo" (13; emphasis added).

The portion of *Invisible Man* that describes the young man's college experience and shows most clearly the influence of Ellison's Tuskegee/Macon County years (chapters 2-6) is extremely important in terms of the novel's themes and motifs. Building on the idea of the protagonist's invisibility announced in the prologue and portrayed in chapter 1, this section reveals the youth attempting to do what is expected of him, thereby denying his own individuality and humanity. Moreover, instead of being rewarded for his attempts to play roles assigned by others, he is punished. After he has been suspended from school (actually expelled) by Dr. Bledsoe for taking Mr. Norton, the white trustee, to Jim Trueblood's cabin and the Golden Day tavern, the young man asks, "How had I come to this? I had kept unswervingly to the path placed before me . . ." (146). Earlier, Dr. Bledsoe tells him, "You're nobody, son. You don't exist . . ." (143). The vet at the Golden Day tells Norton that the young man is "invisible, a walking personification of the Negative . . ." (94). But when the two of them share a bus heading North, the vet gives the invisible man some advice that the latter, after other adventures, will come to adopt: "Be your own father, young man. And remember, the world is possibility if only you'll discover it" (156).

In contrast to the invisible man's inability to define himself at this point in the narrative, Jim Trueblood, the black farmer who has impregnated his own daughter, manages to affirm his sense of self. Valerie Smith comments that "Trueblood asserts his own sense of identity by telling and retelling a tale of his own creation. . . . He understands, as the protagonist comes to learn, that he can control the meaning of his life if he converts his own experiences into a narrative and therefore determines what construction should be placed on them" (44).

A number of critics have commented on Ellison's use of Afro-American folk tradition in *Invisible Man*, especially his use of the blues, and, again, the episodes surrounding the protagonist's college experience are significant. Ellison and Murray view the essential nature and function of the blues in much the same way. Ellison's much-quoted definition of the form is instructive:

> The blues is an impulse to keep the painful details and episodes of a brutal experience alive in one's aching consciousness, to finger its jagged grain, and to transcend it, not by the consolation of philosophy but by squeezing from it a near-tragic, near-comic lyricism. As a form, the blues is an autobiographical chronicle of personal catastrophe expressed lyrically. (*SA* 90)

According to Albert Murray, "*Invisible Man* was *par excellence* the literary extension of the blues. It was as if Ellison had taken an everyday twelve bar blues tune (by a man from down South sitting in a manhole up North singing and signifying about how he got there) and scored it for full orchestra. . . . It was . . . a blues odyssey, a tall tale . . ." (*Omni-Americans* 167). Robert O'Meally explains that the protagonist in *Invisible Man* "struggles to cope with change after change through the magic of his words. . . . Like a blues singer, [he] recounts his story with style, irony, and a sense of absurdity, viewing his trials and glories in terms of adventure and romance" (84-85).

In addition to the similarities between the narrative style of the blues and that of the invisible man, the blues motif reveals itself in the "college" section in other ways. For example, after the young man's stormy session with Dr. Bledsoe, in which the latter tells him to leave school in two days, the absurdity of his predicament is experienced against the background of "the sound of an old guitar-blues plucked from an out-of-tune piano" (146).

Another reflection is Jim Trueblood, who may be viewed as a blues character in his willingness to confront and accept his situation. Valerie Smith points out that he evokes the reader's sympathy as he tells his story "by demonstrating both his willingness to accept responsibility for his sin and his attempt to endure his wife's rage. . . . He even agrees to leave his family for a while. Eventually, however, he insists on returning to them and facing the consequences of his actions" (46). Because the sexual act occurred while Trueblood was dreaming, his guilt is not clear-cut, and he "acknowledges the complexity and ambiguity of his situation: being both guilty and not guilty of incest" (Smith 44). He is aided in this acceptance by singing the blues. Further, he keeps his brutal experience alive in his consciousness, fingers its jagged grain, and transcends it by telling his story over and over. This process, as noted above, is essential to his defining himself. In confronting his circumstances, he acknowledges his humanity and forges his own identity; he is able to say, "I ain't nobody but myself" (66). The invisible man, after many misadventures, comes to the same realization.

Ellison's years at Tuskegee (and in Macon County) not only provided him with raw material for *Invisible Man*; they also contributed significantly to his development in other ways. It was at Tuskegee, for example, that Ellison came upon *The Waste Land*, an important discovery:

> I went to Tuskegee to study music, hoping to become a composer of symphonies and there, during my second year, I read *The Waste Land* and that, although I was then unaware of it, was the real transition to writing . . . . [It] seized my mind. I was intrigued by its power to move me while eluding my understanding. . . . [A]nd even though I could not understand then, its range of allusion was as mixed and as varied as that of Louis Armstrong. . . . There was nothing to do but look up the references in the footnotes to the poem, and thus began

> my conscious education in literature. (*SA* 161-62)

Ellison was also influenced by some of his Tuskegee professors. He dedicated *Shadow and Act* to Morteza Sprague, calling him "a dedicated dreamer in a land most strange." Art instructor Eva Hamlin encouraged him to continue his sculpture studies in New York, and Hazel Harrison, professor of music, gave him a telling metaphor that he would not forget. "It was at Tuskegee Institute," he explains, "during the mid-1930s that I was made aware of the little man behind the stove" (*Territory* 4). Ellison tells of undergoing a severe critique of one of his trumpet recitals and seeking out Hazel Harrison for solace. However, instead of offering sympathy, she gives him this advice:

> [Y]ou must *always* play your best, even if it's only in the waiting room at Chehaw Station, because in this country there'll always be a little man hidden behind the stove. . . . There'll always be the little man whom you don't expect, and he'll know the *music*, and the *tradition*, and the standards of *musicianship* required for whatever you set out to perform. (*Territory* 4; italics Ellison's)

Ellison was to carry this image with him, and he says that "the little stove warmer has come to symbolize nothing less than the enigma of aesthetic communication in American democracy" (*Territory* 6).

And of course, Ellison appreciated the vital musical tradition which, under the leadership of William L. Dawson, "bathed each and every thing that was done at Tuskegee. . . . Underneath the desire for education, underneath the desire for possession of more technology, underneath the desire for intellectual competency is that other thing—that which can only be expressed through art" (qtd. in O'Meally 17).

Even the negative aspects of his Southern experiences were motivational:

> I could escape the reduction imposed by unjust laws and customs, but not that imposed by ideas which defined me as no more than the *sum* of those laws and customs. I learned to outmaneuver those who interpreted my silence as submission, my efforts at self-control as fear, my contempt as awe before superior status, my dreams of faraway places and room at the top of the heap as defeat before the barriers of their stifling, provincial world. . . . I recall this not in complaint, for thus was I disciplined to endure the absurdities of both conscious and unconscious prejudice, to resist racial provocation and, before the ready violence of brutal policeman, railroad "bulls," and casual white citizens, to hold my peace and bide my time. Thus was I forced to evaluate my own self-worth, and the narrow freedom in which it existed, against the power of those who would destroy me. (*SA* 128-29; italics Ellison's)

Many would agree that Ralph Ellison is the jewel in the crown of Tuskegee's literary heritage. In 1963, Tuskegee University (then, Tuskegee Institute) awarded him the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters. These words were included in the verbal tribute: "In the fashion of the truly encompassing artist, your concerns transcend the shadows that obscure man's strivings and potentialities and deal, rather, with the dignity and grace that illumine his existence" (Foster). It is clear that Macon County, Tuskegee, and Tuskegee University—a sphere of that "land most strange"—have played no small part in the shaping of these concerns.

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Lella Warren's Use of the *Kindermord* Motif in *Foundation Stone*

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Lella Warren (1899-1982) drew upon her Barbour County family history for two long novels, *Foundation Stone* (1940) and *Whetstone Walls* (1952). (Photo courtesy of Read Alabama!)

The "killing of children" motif is not new in literature. Euripides and Seneca used it to portray the terrible passion of a woman wronged in their characterization of Medea. Nor is this unsettling *kindermord* motif outdated. Toni Morrison's character Sethe in her 1987 novel, *Beloved*, terrifies her oppressors and would-be captors with her heinous act—the murder of her female child to prevent her enslavement by white men. Lella Warren, in her novel *Foundation Stone*, employs this motif in portraying a timeless theme in literature: woman's need to establish power over the men in her life and her willingness

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to resort to the "killing of her child" in order to accomplish it.

Published in 1940, Warren's book was an immediate success with its depiction of the less heralded days of frontier life in Alabama as well as the often chronicled Civil War period. Carefully researched, the novel depicts the migration in the 1820s of the Whetstone family from the depleted land of South Carolina to the verdant wilderness of east Alabama, where they battle the ravages of nature and hostile Indians to forge a new life and establish a plantation dynasty. The novel traces the travails of the Whetstone clan, from the marriage of a 13-year-old girl to a man 17 years her senior, through the trials and tribulations of rearing 10 children, earning a living, pursuing dreams, and suffering pain. The rigorous physical demands of the early frontier days give way to the opulence of the pre-war period and to the tragedies of civil war. Lella Warren gives us insight into the saga of the Whetstone family, as its members grow up and as they grow older—just as she does into the life of the State of Alabama, as its cotton culture blossoms and fades.

In *Foundation Stone*, Warren depicts the Southern woman as a strong-willed female capable of shaping her own destiny. She destroys the image of the Southern female as a dancing belle in fragile hoop-skirt finery as she portrays the iron will of pioneer women who, alongside their husbands, forge a path into the wilderness of Alabama and shape a civilized world. Gerda Whetstone and her daughter Lucinda Malone Bruton are recreations of the mythic archetype of woman, an archetype perhaps best exemplified in the classical Greek drama, *Medea*.

The mythic figure Medea exemplifies many of the characteristics of the archetypal roles of woman: mother, helpmeet, temptress. She is passionately loyal to the man she loves, Jason, and leaves her home and her family to follow him. She sacrifices her brother, Apsyrtus, in order to ensure Jason's success in his quest. She follows him to Greece where once again she uses her intellect and her charm to protect Jason and to avenge his father's death. In lonely exile in Corinth, Medea begins to build a home and family for the man she loves; two sons are born to them. Euripides's portrayal of the tragic turn of events demonstrates the capacity of Medea to make painful decisions in shaping her own destiny. Devastated by Jason's treacherous betrayal of her for a younger woman, daughter of the King of Corinth, and by his arrogant ingratitude for her loyalty and her unselfish love, Medea vows to avenge herself and her children. She plots the death of the young princess and then kills her own children, rather than have them imprisoned by her enemies. In Seneca's version of the tragedy, Medea recognizes Jason's vulnerability—his love for his children—and plots to destroy him by murdering them. Medea's display of power gives her an almost superhuman quality.

Lella Warren's portrayal of the archetypal role of woman is manifested in Gerda Van Ifort who leaves her New York home for the South Carolina haven of her husband, Yarbrough Whetstone, and then sacrifices that secure habitat to follow him to the wilderness of Alabama so that he can pursue his dreams. She is his confidante and friend as he makes the difficult decision to leave the family home place in South Carolina to explore the potential offerings of the new State of Alabama. Gerda is the helpmeet who efficiently manages the South Carolina plantation while her husband is on a one-year exploratory trip into the new land. Her management of the farm becomes her obsession in his absence, and she is quite successful, turning a better crop than Yarbrough had managed in several years. Upon his return, she breaks up the household and transports family, household furnishings, and slaves into the Indian territories of eastern Alabama.

Pregnant with her fifth child, the 18-year-old Gerda stoically endures the hardships of travel on the two-month trek to Alabama where she expects to put her mark upon the new land as they shape a home out of the wilderness. Her first sighting of the new "Whetstone plantation" is marred by her first sighting also of the Dutch servant Marta and her young baby, who bears undoubtedly all the Whetstone features. Gerda's discovery of Yarbrough's undeniable infidelity has a jolting effect upon her:

> She simply stood there, trapped in her own pregnant body. She turned one of her hands over and over, backward and forward, and back again, staring at its shape, yet not knowing what she saw. She could not call this pain. It was being filled up with something cold and solid. She knew not what to call it, because it was—nothing. (Warren 82)

Gerda's resolve begins at the dinner table that night as she, for the first time, instead of her mother-in-law, asks the grace. Gerda's handling of her husband's unfaithfulness astonishes all those around her, especially Yarbrough and Marta. She carefully and calmly dispenses her justice: she refuses Yarbrough's lame excuses, telling him she does not want any "*notions* put into [her] mind, to fasten on. To turn over and over" (Warren 84; italics Warren's); she provides Marta with a dowry, passage to the North, and a new beginning—the "only decent" thing to do; and she keeps the child, whom she names Hans, to be reared in his father's house as a Whetstone. Against the protestations of her negro slave Pokey, Gerda sends Yarbrough to escort Marta to Columbus, Georgia to join a wagon train headed north, because she says he owes that much to the woman.

In Yarbrough's absence, Gerda meticulously plans her next act, an act that she *must* and *will*, do alone: she aborts the child she is carrying, because "something [is] amiss about that child" (Warren 89), and Gerda refuses to jeopardize her role in making this new land hers. She survives the torturous pain of having the baby wrenched from her womb and the feverish infection that follows, to sit proudly upright, without guilt or remorse, to greet Yarbrough upon his return two weeks later. Gerda's strength subdues Yarbrough, and he quietly accepts the heavy burden of his role in the death of their daughter, Elzivir. Gerda's grandfather sorrowfully laments his role in shaping her strong will, in his giving her too much freedom, that would lead her to think she could bend all things to fit her will. But Gerda knows only one thing: that she does not want to be "a weakling spinning out a long thin thread" (Warren 92), that she wants to live her own life and put her mark upon this land, to make it hers. And she makes her statement to her philandering husband in the most effective way she knows: the destruction of the child he has conceived upon her in the midst of his betrayal and infidelity to their love.

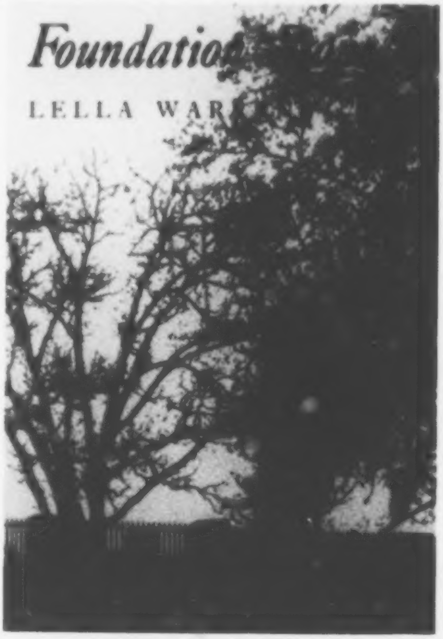
Almost a decade later, Yarbrough still struggles with this power that Gerda holds over him. Confronted by the threat of massacre from the warring Creek Indians, Yarbrough decides his family must flee to Georgia while the men defend the lands they have conquered from the avenging Indians. Gerda, pregnant with her tenth child, resists his decree. Yarbrough, in an outburst, reveals his weakness and the anger locked inside him:

> "Now see here, Gerda! Once you sat in the place of Fate and took from us our unborn child. You did us then a greater wrong even than the one I had done you, I do believe. For you took from me by that dangerous, lone, forced childbirth part of my male spirit. Now you have to give back to

> me an equal portion of your woman's obedience. Not that you subtracted too much from my manhood, and not that your reward will turn out to be joy and peace. For I may be gone out of life by tomorrow night. But as long as I do live after this, you cannot thwart me and ever expect me to husband you again! Learn this once and for all, I am the *master* here, and *no woman*, not even you, can destroy me!" (Warren 198-99; italics Warren's)

Gerda's decision to obey her husband on this occasion again demonstrates her wisdom. She preserves the family, to return after the Indians have been removed and to re-establish the Whetstone dynasty in its east Alabama homeland. Gerda had early on formed "her thoughts about the makeshift measures required by even the best of marriages" (Warren 85), and she prudently resorts to whatever is necessary to reach her goal: to make this land hers, "as much of it as she could put her mark upon" (Warren 83). Yarbrough Whetstone builds the Rock Wall Place, a home that will give permanence to his dynasty, but Gerda is the mortar which holds it together. Throughout his life of philanderings and vulnerable humanness, throughout the cycles of economic deprivation and affluence, throughout the sacrifices of pioneering and warfare, Gerda remains the solid foundation stone upon which the Whetstone dynasty is built. She perseveres because she refuses to relinquish her spirit to the man she loves or to the children she bears. She chooses to shape her own life in wifehood and in widowhood, refusing after Yarbrough's death the plaintive offer of marriage from her long-time admirer, "kissin-kin" Willy Hampley.

Gerda's daughter Lucinda shares many of her mother's characteristics but also reveals a more passionate, uncontrollable nature, much like that of Euripides's Medea who "has obviously been accustomed to giving her emotions free reign, both in the positive sense (in the vigor and absoluteness of her love for Jason, a love for which she gave up everything she possessed) and in the negative sense (for she does not hesitate to shed blood to get what her passion demands)" (*Reader's Companion to World Literature* 279). Lucinda's character reveals more of the negative traits: she rides unbridled through life, glibly trampling underneath all those who get in her way, from her meek sister Jobyna to the numerous beaus who fall at her feet to the dutiful, somber Hans who eventually offers his life for her. The one threat to her freedom is the high-spirited Irishman, Jerard Malone, older



Frequently and positively compared with *Gone With the Wind*, Lella Warren's *Foundation Stone* was a best-seller in the United States and England. (This book cover is from the Library of Alabama Classics series and has been reproduced with the permission of the University of Alabama Press.)

than her father, who first tries to conquer her mother and then vows to have Lucinda as his own "for keeps" (Warren 165). Lucinda realizes the power she has over the man and demands that he give her "all the leeway" she wants for a few years, to which he agrees. As she tells her mother:

> "Mr. Malone wanted to bespeak Papa for my hand today. I told him he'd have to bide my time. . . . I'm going to have my free fun first that you missed, before any man alive gets me all dragged out, having babies and curing hog meat." (Warren 166)

Jerard Malone waits, while Lucinda romps and cavorts, "gloat[ing] over the smitten victims" (Warren 237) she collects. After one of her more devastating escapades (the elopement of her sister Jobyna with C. D. Melbourne), both her parents and Jerard Malone decide it is time to rein her in. In an intimate moment with her mother on her wedding day, Lucinda recognizes their similarities—they are "both drastic powers turned loose in the land" (Warren 259). Lucinda admits to herself: "The only difference is that she flows in deep channels towards some place, while I lay waste the land, flooding all over it" (Warren 259).

Lucinda soon tires of the idyllic state that Jerard Malone tries to create for her at their mansion, Top Hill, and seeks interludes of frivolous flirtations while Jerard grapples with the business affairs of the tremendous empire that he wishes to bequeath to his offspring. When Lucinda discovers she is pregnant, Jerard is jubilant for he feared he had waited too late to sire a child and he desires an heir more than he desires his riches. Lucinda, however, sullenly resents the intrusion of this other being upon her person, especially when the conversation of others focuses on the "coming baby in preference to herself" (Warren 295) and when she no longer feels that she can "attract the usual attention from any of the entertaining young men" (Warren 295). After weeks of suffering attacks of nausea and after the sixth vomiting spasm in one day, Lucinda lifts her head from the "slop-jar" and vows to rid herself of the very thing causing all her misery. She impetuously dons her riding habit and succeeds in being thrown from the horse to dislodge the new inhabitant from her womb.

She contentedly accepts Dr. Caraway's news that she has lost the baby, but Jerard Malone does not recover from this blow that Lucinda has dealt him. He begins to drink heavily and withdraws from the everyday affairs of running his plantations. In a final confrontation with her, Jerard tells Lucinda: "But of all the women I've ever had, white or black, you're the worst. And I made you my *wife*! Yet you couldn't even let me keep my child" (Warren 308; italics Warren's). Jerard leaves his plantations and Lucinda because he sees that she is destroying him, "first this part of him, then that" (Warren 308-09).

Two months later, Malone writes that he is disposing of all his property and sending Lucinda the profits; he is leaving for Texas where he hopes to begin life anew, away from her. As he says: "I have not the Will Power to be a man around you and you need a mighty strong man to control both you and himself" (Warren 312). Lucinda becomes the mistress of her own empire, but a sterile one, which she rules with complete authority. Her subsequent union with Danley Bruton is for convenience, not passion, and the birth of their son, Whetstone, is a peace offering to her father made shortly before his death. Lucinda remains aloof to the needs of others throughout her life but retains control over the lives of the men surrounding her. Eventually, even Gerda reluctantly recognizes that, though Lucinda has an evilness within her, she also has that spirit that will "kindle the fire" in the Whetstone children's veins and she wants Lucinda to carry on her role as leader of the family. As she passes the torch to her daughter, she says: "You know, Lucinda, somehow you remind me of myself a little. Long ago, when I went trampling, Pokey used to get after me about it, tell me that I acted like the sister to God. Well, you remind me of that same high-stepping creature. 'And you, Sister God, are my favourite child!'" (Warren 637)

Gerda and Lucinda, like Medea, take on a superhuman quality in their portrayal of strength, a frightening strength that has the power to destroy just as it does to create. These female characters—Medea, Gerda, and Lucinda—make attempts to establish power over the men in their lives, to shape their own destiny. Whether driven by revenge, ambition, selfishness, or a desire for freedom, each woman establishes her dominance over the man in her life by destroying his creation. When Euripides wrote his tragedy in 431 BC, Medea's actions were horrifying to his audience. Lella Warren's portrayal of this theme in *Foundation Stone*, published in 1940, is a startlingly modern statement of this timeless theme: woman's deep desire to escape the bondage inflicted upon her by her submission to a male, whether willing or unwilling. Gerda Whetstone and Lucinda Malone Bruton convey that spirit of rebellion that may lie dormant for a long period of time, until unleashed by the passionate fury of love or hate. The rediscovery and acceptance of Lella Warren's work by today's readers reinforces the universality and the timelessness of her theme.

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Alabama Journals: Selfconscious and Unselfconscious Art

Norman McMillan

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When the call for papers for this issue of *Alabama English* went out, I had just finished reading *And Their Children After Them*, a new book by Dale Maharidge and Michael Williamson which investigates the subsequent lives of three tenant families from Hale County, Alabama, who were written about by James Agee in his now-classic, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. It might be argued that I took an inordinate interest in the new book just as perhaps I had in Agee's book when I first read it in the early 1960s. I had, after all, spent the first nine years of my life in Hale County, and one of those years my family spent as tenant farmers on Bryant Rhodes's farm a few miles down toward Greensboro from Hobe's Hill, where Agee's tenants lived. Although I never knew these people—the Gudgers, Woods, and Ricketts—they were people not so terribly different from my family and others we knew.[1]

So enthusiastic was I about *And Their Children After Them*—so moved by it, in fact—that I even struggled back through Agee's demanding and tedious work. After that, I wanted to place Agee into the context of documentary writers who came to Alabama during the 1930s, showing how Agee's intentions depart so markedly from the standard approaches of his fellow authors of the period. Then I came to focus on one person in Agee's work, Emma Woods, who for one year kept a diary in which she responded to the same period Agee did as well as to her life after that time. In looking at the consciousness out of which her account grows, we are better able to see the peculiar consciousness—or selfconsciousness—out of which Agee's book takes shape.

In 1936 *Fortune* magazine sent Agee and photographer Walker Evans to do an article on the lives of white tenant farmers. After first going to Oklahoma, where they were unable to find any sharecroppers, they headed on to Alabama, where they found them in abundance. The only problem was finding a family with which they could live closely for a few weeks. Agee was going to make sure that he would not be guilty of the sin of so many documentary writers: merely passing through a place, snapping some pictures, making a few notes, and returning to their New York offices to write articles supporting a thesis written before they even came south. He wanted, as he suggested in an epigraph, to "expose [himself] to feel what wretches feel"; and upon making contact with the Gudgers, Woods, and Ricketts families, he gained that opportunity. For a month in the summer of 1936, he lived with the Gudgers.

Of the many writers and photographers who passed through Alabama in the 1930s, the two best known pairs were Dorothea Lange and Paul Taylor and Margaret Bourke White and Erskine Caldwell. White and Caldwell were actually doing their work during the very same summer Agee and Evans were, and it was for these two that Agee had the greatest disdain. First, he thought their book, *You Have Seen Their Faces,* was condescending, exploitational, and glib. It argued, he felt, the tired naturalistic thesis that tenant farmers were best seen exclusively as victims of the social, economic, and political systems of their day. It would have been particularly appalling to Agee that Caldwell presumed to put words into the mouths of the subjects of White's photographs rather than letting them speak for themselves. But Agee reserved his greatest ire for White, whose photographs he thought brutalized the poor people she photographed and whose middle class values and feelings of superiority to her subjects he satirized in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men.* All in all, Agee thought she and Caldwell made the people they met objects, not subjects, of their works, diminishing what he called their "human actuality" (Stott 222-23).

The article Agee wrote about his Alabama sojourn made every effort to avoid the errors of Caldwell, and Evans's photographs seemed much less brutal and exploitative. But the editors at *Fortune* were not at all ready for what Agee gave them, in part because of a change in editorial policy but more because Agee set out to write something he knew they would reject. Agee then began a long struggle to produce a book on the topic, signing on first with Harper and Row but finally being dropped after repeated failures to meet deadlines and numerous arrogant demands from Agee. Houghton Mifflin did publish the book in 1941, but the timing was off: the country was just entering World War II and the public had been bombarded with books on the Depression, the most well-known of which included Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* and *You Have Seen Their Faces.* The American public was just not interested in another book on sharecroppers. Only 600 copies of the book were sold, and reviews were mixed. But even those reviewers who disliked the book knew that they were not dealing with an ordinary documentary. As William Stott says of the book, "It culminates the central rhetoric of the time, and explodes it, surpasses it, shows it up" (x). This project, according to Agee's friend, classicist Robert Fitzgerald, activated the central moral, physical, and intellectual questions of life for Agee in a way no ordinary documentary could address (Coles 56). Lionel Trilling, in his review, called the book "the most realistic and most important moral effort of our American generation" (102).

Anyone who reads *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* certainly must feel that Agee was attempting a great deal, and perhaps the impossible, in his book. To begin with, he wanted to express his empathy with the families he visited; he felt a kinship with them. Louis Rubin cites Agee's country Southern roots on his father's side, and Agee himself says that he is confronting half of his own blood in his visit with the tenant farmers (Rubin 101-02; Agee 415). This empathy was not late blooming; as a child he had tried to give his shoes and socks to the barefooted rural poor (Bergreen 22). Of Agee's Alabama experience, his longtime mentor, friend, and correspondent, Father Flye, said the following:

> Many persons couldn't have done that; the people wouldn't have opened up to them. But he was that sort of person; that is, he hadn't a trace of anything like superciliousness, or patronage, or talking down to people, or that kind of thing. There would

> have been many people who couldn't adapt that way. They would have had a sense of, well, this is a specimen of human life that I'm objectively looking at. He had a loathing of doing that. (Coles 75)

As an author, Agee possessed an empathy even more complicated. He wanted to render the subjects of his book and their lives in all their fullness and with the greatest faithfulness to their reality. He says that he wants to speak with "individual, antiauthoritative human consciousness" (xiv). In another place he says that he wants to function as a camera, which renders the "unimagined" world without intrusion. Of course, he was unable to do either, but he earnestly wanted to show that the sharecroppers were much more than sharecroppers. They were as worthy and as precious as *Fortune* readers. He wanted the words to come as close as possible to what he called "the illusion of embodiment" (238). Robert Fitzgerald says of him:

> I think that more than any man I have ever known, more, I would say, than any man who engaged in writing in my lifetime, he insisted upon respect for the real, for a reality conceived not as one belonging to the school of realists, but as a religious man would feel toward the real, confronting what he regarded as the created world, a world created from moment to moment by a power beyond conception. To respect this in all details, ambiguities, peculiarities, and finenesses was his aim. This, above all, was what he loved, and truth in this sense was his desire. (Coles 113)

But in creating this illusion of embodiment, time and time again Agee tries the reader's patience with his interminable descriptions, not only of persons, but of food, garments, houses, and any number of other objects. For example, without their knowing it, he goes through the contents of the Gudger's house and catalogues them as thoroughly as an auctioneer. The literal mattered very much to him; his respect for his subject matter required such treatment.

But Agee is not writing objective reportage—if journalism, it is surely "new" journalism. He can never get himself and his personal preoccupations out of the picture. Louis Rubin goes so far as to say that *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* is not a book on sharecropping at all, but a book about writing a book on sharecropping (102-03). Agee himself had quoted Cocteau's remark on Picasso that "the subject matter is merely an excuse for the painting, and that Picasso does away with the excuse" (239). While the quote "is an indirect admission by Agee of how important his presence is within the text" (Kramer 119), he was unable to do away with his subject matter altogether. Doing justice to his subject required a realism much beyond mere description, one that looked so deeply at ordinary things that the divine would eventually emerge. This sacramental vision allowed him to see beauty in all things, even in abomination. Robert Coles compares Agee's vision to that of Flannery O'Connor, and, overlooking the tremendous difference in the way they choose to depict the world they are in, we can see that the comparison is just: in both, the close contemplation of the spirit made flesh deepens our understanding of the mystery of this world (Coles 184). In both writers, this is a strong, unsentimental vision, one that spares the customary tears, pity, and liberal concern, but looks to understanding and appreciation.

Agee's sacramental vision does not mean, however, that he has no social concern. For example, his remarks on education are virulent attacks on all systems of American education — including his *alma mater* Harvard (289-315). For the tenant farmers he visited in Alabama he knew that something could be and should be done. But whatever that was, he knew equally well that it must be done in a context of appreciation and dignity. Agee wrestled with the paradox that there was beauty in this life but that its conditions were appalling, that there was dignity in these people but there was at the same time desperate and unspeakable need. Without undermining the special value and dignity, how could he make these particular people representatives of the dreadful conditions under which this class of people lived? He never resolved this conflict, as he did not resolve so many other things in the book. We are left with Agee's strong feeling that, although the world must be improved, it is worthy of praise as it is (Holder 195-97).

Because Agee wanted to do so much, the book is a noble failure in many ways. Words, he says, "are the most inevitably inaccurate of all mediums of records and communication," and so he feels that his efforts will necessarily be failures (236-38). As he strains to present things in their fullness, most readers I know chafe at his extended tedious descriptions of common items (11 pages, for example, to describe three women's dresses). Near the end of the book he quotes some of Blake's aphorisms, the most telling of which is, "You never know what is enough until you know what is more than enough" (458). This aphorism explains a lot in his book. He is also guilty of some of the most opaque and obfuscatory prose I've ever seen. Who knows what a passage like this might mean:

> In their prodigious realm, their field, bashfully at first, less timorous, later, rashly, all calmly boldly now, like the tingling and standing up of plants, leaves, planted crops out of the earth into the yearly approach of the sun, the noises and natures of the dark had with the ceremonial gestures of music and of erosion lifted forth the thousand several forms of their entrancement, and had so resonantly taken over the world that this domestic, this human silence obtained, prevailed, only locally, shallowly, and with the childlike and frugal dignity of a coal-oil lamp stood out on a wide night meadow and of a star sustained, unraveling in one rivery sigh its irremediable vitality, on the alien size of space. (20)

Agee feels such language is at times necessary to present the fullness of his topic and to avoid the facile, polemical, propagandistic language normally found in documentaries. He would prefer to achieve honest boredom than dishonest entertainment. Still the reader is bound to be puzzled in his boredom.

An equally significant failure was in not reaching the audience he was writing for—the "New York" intellectuals from the liberal and radical (and often literary) worlds. Sylvia Jenkins Cook says that Agee's distaste for such people led him to create a work "as unpalatable to the aesthetes of suffering as he could possibly contrive" (94). He purposely wanted to antagonize these readers, or "to blow their brains out" with his text, as he chose to put it. He wanted to function in the manner of the ancient paradoxist and stir his readers to confront his subject matter. He on occasion taunts his readers:

> . . . this is a book about "sharecroppers," and is written for all those who have a soft place in their hearts for the laughter and tears inherent in poverty viewed at a distance, and especially for those who can afford the retail price; in the hope that the reader will be edified, and may feel kindly disposed toward any well-thought-out liberal efforts to rectify the unpleasant situation down South, and will somewhat better and more guiltily appreciate the next good meal he eats. . . . (14)

Agee, in his determination to arouse his readers, is similar to the poet William Carlos Williams, who once said to Robert Coles, "I sound off, sometimes—and strike out. But even so, I think I strike out making a lot of noise, and catching the attention of some people, and if it's an issue that's important, and they stop and think what *they* think, I'm glad" (93). This is close to Agee's intention, but unfortunately his audience was exceedingly small and the book had very little effect in Agee's lifetime.

Ironically, when *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* did gain a large audience (over a half million copies have been sold since it was reissued), the readers were sympathetic, not opposing. Many have taken strength from his book despite its contradictions and difficulty. A Harvard-educated white freedom fighter in Mississippi during the 1960s appreciated Agee for knowing all the contradictions he experienced in those days. A young black man at the same time praised Agee because "he was brave and honest enough to expose himself, and show how mixed up he was" (Coles 98). In the end, readers seem impressed with Agee's ability to entertain contradictory ideas simultaneously, but we can see that he never does so with comfortable negative capability. The book he wrote does not come near resolving this tension, and Agee would probably say that no honest book on his topic ever could.

One character from *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* who seems to have made a special impression on Agee was Emma Woods, a young married woman he knew only for one week, but—if we can believe him—he loved and lusted after, even imagining having group sex with her, Evans, and her brother-in-law in whose house they were all staying. Emma, like all the other Alabama subjects of the book, never saw the book until it was reissued in the 1960s, and she professed to be surprised that he was so fond of her. Interviewed in a documentary film over 40 years later, she says with a wink and a sly smile, "I wish I'd a-knowed he felt like that. Me and him would have had more fun than we *did*" (*Let Us Now Praise Famous Men Revisited*).

When Agee writes of Emma, we see that he is most drawn to her because of her sweetness, vitality, and verve, which he fears will be crushed by her sorry husband who is about to take her off to a miserable life of sharecropping in Mississippi. Vitality and grit—Emma possessed those in abundance. She was the only one of the Alabama tenants who dared to spy back on Agee and Evans. While Agee and Evans were away, she went through Agee's things just as he had secretly gone through the possessions of the Gudgers. Among the things she found were some big floppy pajamas of Agee's, and for a while she pranced about in them, much to the consternation of her older sister (Maharidge and Williamson 55-56). Howell Raines, writing in recent years about Emma, guesses (correctly I think) that what moved Agee so much about her was this vitality, in contrast to her bleak future (38).

One of the beautiful passages of *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* is the scene describing Emma's departure from the Gudger household. At the heart of it is Agee's rendering of Emma's parting words to him, words which sound authentic since they are so untypical of Agee himself:

> . . . I want you and Mr. Walker to know how much we all like you, because you make us feel easy with you; we don't have to act any different from what it comes natural to act, and we don't have to worry what you're thinking about us, it's just like you was our own people and had always lived here with us, you all are so kind, and nice, and quiet, and easygoing, and we wisht you wasn't never going to go away but stay on here with us, and I just want to tell you how much we all keer about you. . . . (64)

This voice is hauntingly the same as that in the BBC film as well as in the diary she wrote many years later. Agee is exactly on target, I believe, when he describes her as "not wasting any roundabout time or waiting for an appropriate rhythm, yet not in haste, looking me steadily and sweetly in the eyes" (64).

Because of Agee's education, sophistication, intelligent curiosity, lack of restraint, and any number of other complications, he would never have been capable of steadily producing Emma's directness. Rather, he becomes so selfconscious, so aware of complexity and ambiguity, and so conscious of audience that he has to search for a style or styles to match these concerns. For better or worse, Emma, as a writer just as a speaker, has no such conditions.

Emma went on to the rough and difficult life Agee had predicted for her. She remained married to her shiftless husband, who stayed away from home for months at a time, leaving Emma alone to make the cotton crop, to deal with landlords, to raise the children—in effect to be head of the household. She emerges, from her diary as well as from her statements in interviews, as a woman of immense moral as well as physical strength. Her sister said that when you look at Emma, "You're looking at a self-made woman" (Raines 38). She share-cropped until the mid-1950s, a member of a fast disappearing group of people because of the increased use of machines in agriculture.[2] She had by that time developed a case of aggravated asthma, and through an Alabama rehabilitation agency she was given a new purchase on life. She gained medical attention and was helped to get a job at a nursing home. With financial security, she gained the independence to divorce her husband, who had not taken kindly to her liberation and had threatened her life on occasion. Eventually she saved enough money to buy her own little house in Holt, Alabama, with her daughter and son-in-law.

For her birthday in 1975, Emma was given a calendar datebook by her grandson, and for that year she kept a diary. In it she remembers her childhood and adolescence, looks back at her difficult years of marriage, and responds to current events in her life. What she achieves in the diary is, I think remarkable, given the fact that she had only five years of schooling. Freed from the selfconsciousness of Agee, she writes primarily for herself, for her own consolation, but she does address "good people" in one entry and "you" in another, indicating that she imagines herself explaining things to others and that she longs for understanding. Her entries, which are so unselfconscious, reveal this woman's desire to make sense of things. They reveal her struggle and her resignation, her resentment and her forgiveness, her laughter and her seriousness. Especially pleasing is her sense of humor—a quality Agee seems to have been largely devoid of. For example, she ends an entry on an especially perplexing problem with the following: "So Dear Aby what do you think will ever happen to us. Signed Allice in Wonder Land" (Maharidge and Williamson 197).

Although Emma's writing is semi-literate by surface rules, a close look at the rhythms, images, and details of some of her writing leads to the conclusion that she a natural writer. We know that Emma's mother, who died when she was 13, encouraged her to write, and in her father she had the model of a much-heralded story teller. One particular entry in the diary shows Emma at her best, a passage which gently and unobtrusively places the reader in touch with universal experience. In it she speaks of her son who was killed when a riverboat boiler blew up:

> We cant understand why these things has to happen so quick. He was so big and healthy we thought and he went away like a candle blowed out or at least that is what we was told. But as for knowing we dont. I ask my

> self what did he think about last . . . . And then he lay on the floor of that old boat burnt up and me here sleeping in my bed of ease. I wont never get over that. He had to die all by his self. And the way he had to go is killing me. He was so afraid of fire. He never liked for me to even burn trash in the yard. He was a sweet old boy to his mama and he knew that. My heart is broke in a way that it will never heal. A part of it is in the grave with my Sonny. God have mercy on us. (Maharidge and Williamson 186-87)

In this passage is a dignity I believe Agee strived to capture in his subjects. I will run the risk of scorn by admitting that when I read the passage I thought of Hecuba and the women at the end of *Riders to the Sea*. And the mother's grief is broadened to include us all in the concluding sentence of Emma's entry.

There is very good reason to believe that Agee would have been impressed with Emma's diary. He once said that he found untutored Southerners among "the only honest and beautiful users of language" (306). We also know that he found a set of letters in the attic of a house he once lived in and he wanted to publish them as an example of "unselfconscious art" (a good way to describe Emma's diary). He liked the letters for their immediacy and their flawlessness of revelation, though they were clumsy, misspelled, and sometimes monotonous. His parody of these letters, "P.S. Abbie stept on a bedbug last night and J. fell and broke her pelvis. Well, I must wash now," (Bergreen 220) has subject matter that is paltry next to Emma's, but it is not far away from Emma's style.

In the end, both Agee and Emma are trying to use language to make sense out of a painful, troubling, and complicated existence. For Agee, the questions are so many and so tortured that he is not up to appropriating a language which can adequately deal with them. His greatness lies in his valiant struggle to find that language, an effort which puts his documentary in a class by itself. Emma, on the other hand, is not at any conscious level aware of the sorts of questions which plagued Agee. But she too knows the value of words in figuring out the enigmas of the world. In the last entry in her diary, she identifies herself as one who has always been a seeker:

> I am going to stop writing now. I may never write any more about this. But good people I just want to say this. I think what I have missed has ben a mothers tender love. I think that is the reson that I have looked for something that I have never ben able to find (Maharidge and Williamson 198).

In this entry we find Emma making a discovery that seems quite simple—or even simple-minded—when viewed in one way, but it gives her a degree of peace, a sort of summing up of her understanding of self.

Agee not only never gained any peace from whatever discoveries he made in writing *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, but he remained for the rest of his short self-destructive life in a state of confusion, yet a confusion which suggested the greatest depth, the greatest yearning, the greatest love, and the greatest pain. The journals of Emma Woods and James Agee—for *Let Us Know Praise Famous Men* is more than anything a journal—remind us of the great diverseness among people in their struggle to know and the challenge of using language to abet and chronicle that struggle.

Notes

[1] Throughout this paper I use the names Agee gave the tenant families rather than their real names. Emma Woods's real name, for example, is Mary Fields McCray.

[2] According to William Stott, "The

Census Bureau stopped counting 'sharecroppers' in 1964 because of their declining number, but whatever one calls them, there are still hundreds of thousands of sharecroppers in the South, most of them casual farm laborers for a few months of each year and on relief the rest of the time" (312).

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John Beecher: Bound Apprentice to a Stubborn Art

James Helten

Currently an English Instructor at Auburn University, Jim Helten earned his PhD from the University of North Dakota in 1985. As an outgrowth of his interest in literature of social protest, for his dissertation he wrote a literary history of Alabama poet and social activist John Beecher; presently he is conducting research for a biography of Beecher. Widely regarded as an unassuming and sensitive person by his colleagues, Helten is noted, nonetheless, for his impeccable but daring taste in ties.

> Enough of blacksmith's blood within me runs
> To know the molten beauty in my brain
> Must be wrought out with hammer blow by blow.
> (*Papers*, untitled sonnet)

The early 1900s in the steel mills of Birmingham, Alabama, were a time of 12-hour shifts, six days and seven nights turn and turn about. Safety standards, compensation for injuries, and retirement pensions were generally unheard of. Mill labor was drawn primarily from classes of poor and uneducated blacks and non-Anglo Saxon whites who were treated by management largely as an expendable product in the process of making steel. In late 1918, shortly before his fifteenth birthday, John Beecher first began working for Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad (TCI), a subsidiary of United States Steel, in a laboratory where tests were conducted to determine the quality of the steel tapped in each day's heats. Having graduated from high school at the age of 14 and returning home from Notre Dame University in late fall when the institution was closed by an outbreak of influenza, Beecher convinced his father, the secretary/treasurer of TCI, to put him to work in the lab supervised by a family friend. In the ensuing 10 years, on an intermittent basis, the younger Beecher would work in each of the company's mills, learning firsthand all phases of the process of making steel, gathering and storing impressions of men and machines that would mould his poetry for the next half century.

A descendent of the controversial nineteenth-century New England family of preachers, abolitionists, and women's rights advocates (including Harriet Beecher Stowe and Henry Ward Beecher), John Beecher was a man of many careers, embracing the multiplicity and the chaos of the twentieth century. He was variously, and in many cases repeatedly, a steel mill worker, college English and/or sociology professor, field sociologist, New Deal program administrator, full-time, part-time and free-lance journalist, ship's bursar and medical officer, researcher and author of two sociological/political histories, medical book salesman, chicken rancher, editor and fine printer, and poet/writer-in-residence at numerous colleges. To these jobs he added the role of social reformer in movements that ranged from organizing labor and protesting McCarthyism to promoting civil rights for blacks and opposing the war in Vietnam.

Beecher's literary reputation, which reached its zenith during the Civil Rights struggles of the 1960s, was greatly enhanced by his social activism. For decades, he chronicled the social and economic suffering of lower class, politically disenfranchised blacks and whites across the nation, but particularly in the South and in his native Alabama. In late 1938 he wrote to fellow activist John Powell:

> I'm about the South the way the Russian writers were. They loathed Russia and yearned to be out of it, but when they were they couldn't write about anything else. Sooner or later I suppose I shall be driven into exile, but when I go I should carry a full pack of impressions, and my pack is by no means full as yet. (*Papers*, Dec. 6)

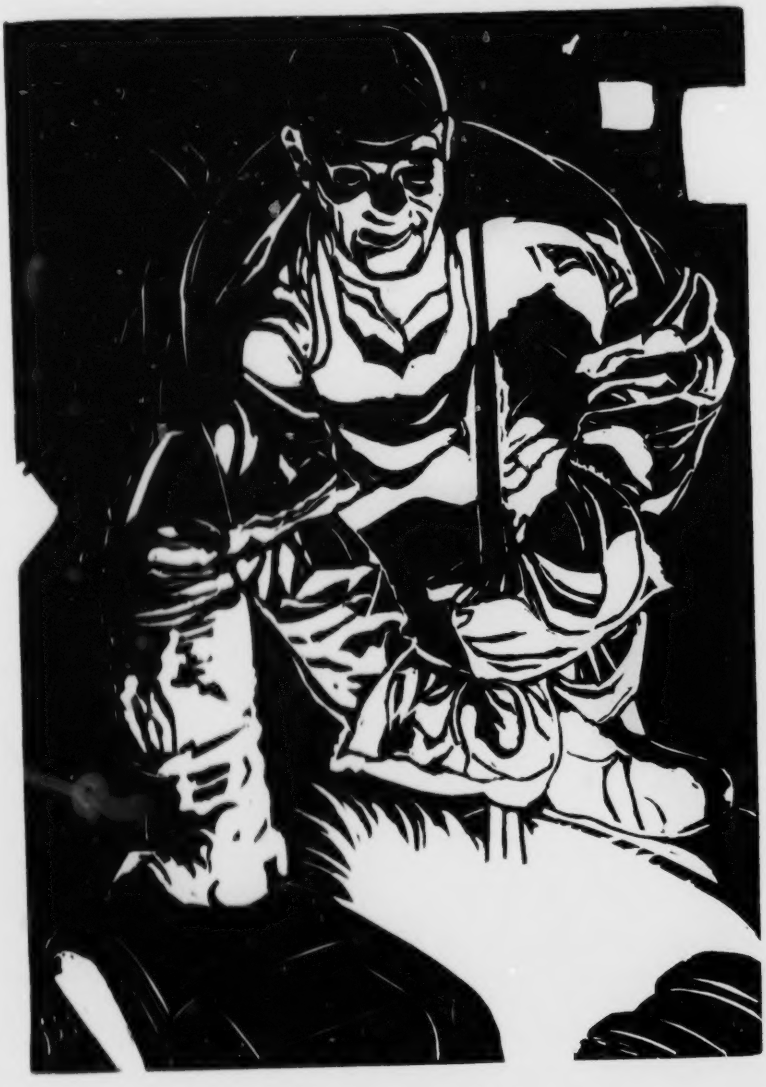
From that pack, ultimately, he would draw material from which to eloquently and passionately oppose racism, the maltreatment of bluecollar labor throughout American industry, and the repression of political dissidents, speaking to a small but generally sympathetic audience, prompting fellow-poet William Carlos Williams to claim for him, "This is a man who speaks for the conscience of the people" (*Papers*, Nov. 23, 1940). However, in a society suffering the throes of a major economic depression, fighting a world war, or embroiled in Cold War "red" hysteria, conscience can be a voice barely audible amidst the din arising from a great middle class previously unaccustomed to tragedy and turmoil in its everyday life.

Ironically, almost prophetically, in the 1960s Beecher gained prominence as a poet with a voice for the hour with previously unpublished compositions written in some cases three decades earlier. While working as a participatory journalist in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama reporting on the racial strife that was to become the Civil Rights Movement, he published to great acclaim the volumes *Report to the Stockholders & Other Poems*, *To Live and Die in Dixie & Other Poems*, and *HEAR THE WIND BLOW! Poems of Protest and Prophecy*, finally capturing the attention and imagination of a broad and supportive audience nationwide, affording him the artistic "legitimacy" which he felt had eluded him since the late 1920s.

In his unfinished autobiography, microfilmed in 1973 as part of the *John Beecher Papers: 1899-1972*, Beecher recalls the first instance, in 1923, of his being "sat down" to write poetry:

> One Saturday night while I was working on night turn, Number 8 furnace tapped out its last heat about three o'clock in the morning and I was free to go home. . . . However, I was full of a curious feeling of having something that I had to get off my chest. I went into the mill office which was deserted. . . . I got some paper and began writing something about the open hearth . . . . It was almost as if I were possessed. I compared the furnaces to monsters which were chewing up their charge of scrap, lime, blood red ore, and hot metal in order to disgorge steel but at the same time were chewing up the men who worked on them. I went on in this style until six-thirty or seven o'clock. . . . I had certainly never wished to become a poet. I thought that I detested poetry on the whole. . . . To be told that I was a poet came as a complete shock. I wasn't sure that I liked being one. . . . I soon dismissed my writing experiment as a fluke and wrote no more that summer. (613-15)

Such stirring of the poetic spirit became one of the few constants in Beecher's life.



This rubber block cut of an open hearth worker accompanied all publications of *Report to Stockholders and Other Poems*. It was created by Barbara Beecher, the poet's wife of 25 years, and reprinted with her permission.

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Beecher's literary career officially began the summer of 1925 while he was a student at Middlebury's School of English in Bread Loaf, Vermont. On August 2, he wrote triumphantly to his fiancee, Virginia Donovan: "I am an author! A poet! 'Big Boy' will shortly grace the pages of *The Bookman*. . . . I have sold a poem, sold it well, and stand revealed as the germ of a 'person'" (*Papers*). ("Big Boy" is a dramatic monologue about an open hearth worker advising a fellow worker to "buck up," stave off the feelings of futility because there's simply nothing else to be done.) The poet's elation at having secured his first national publication employs a curious turn of phrase—"and stand revealed as the germ of a 'person'"—exposing how inextricably bound together were the poet's self-image and his creative persona. The process of making steel would become for him a metaphor for writing poetry, and his poetry would become a self-affirming metaphor for his life.

The eight years from the first "sale" of a poem in 1925 to his next "sale" (the "Report to the Stockholders" sequence to *The New Masses*) in 1933 constitute Beecher's painful and protracted poetic apprenticeship. Two areas of personal growth characterize the period, the development of a personal faith that directly shaped and is reflected in his poetic sensibility (his discernable attitude toward the subjects of his poems) and the discovery of a poetic style to augment that sensibility. Beecher evolved from a stoic, often detached observer to a social protester, exposing mill conditions and affirming the value of reform. That evolution was as essential to Beecher's emotional and spiritual well-being as it was to his artistic development. In 1926, Sidney Cox, Beecher's mentor at Bread Loaf, wrote of his young protege in a letter of reference to the Harvard graduate program in literature:

> He has this primordial strength in him [that] is not a thing of body or nerve alone, it seems to be equally a thing of sensuous and emotional responsiveness. . . . If Mr. Beecher continues his determination to accept no illusions, and to see life through his own eyes and senses, I believe he will acquire a personal faith which seems to me the one thing lacking to make him a genuine artist. (*Papers*, Jan. 20)

Beecher's growing religious, political, and social skepticism had been born of his frustrations as a child prodigy at not finding a niche, at feeling isolated in his surroundings, and was reinforced by his experiences working in the steel mills. He searched desperately for a metaphysical system to replace his waning Catholicism, to ameliorate his increasing distrust of an educational system that continued to fail him, and to justify his growing contempt for a political system in the South that was becoming increasingly subject to the dictates of a burgeoning Ku Klux Klan as early as 1915.

The precise, consistent, yet dynamic process of making steel at first suggested the metaphysical system Beecher sought, a technological substitute pointing the direction to personal salvation, addressing moral dilemmas, and making a coherency out of chaos. However, as he worked in the steel mills alongside the men whom he came to regard as the true representatives of humanity, he began to recognize the insufficiencies of the industry in addressing the social and economic needs of its laborers. As with organized religion, he came to view the steel industry (the institution) and the process of making steel (the practice) as innately inseparable. Initially, the dynamism of the process obscured for him the insufficiencies of the industry as a whole, so as late as November 4, 1928, he could write to his parents:

> I shall write as I feel and not in tradition, ancient or modern. . . . Industry never has been written about properly. The intellectuals show it a

> hell, the Babbitts a Paradise. It is neither, but absolutely impersonal, salvation for some, perdition for others. (*Papers*)

However, as he began to explore more thoroughly the human factors within the industry, he grew less enamored with the basic, inanimate process. An increasing sensitivity to the aspirations of fellow human beings revealed to him human behaviors and qualities worthy of respect, of inclusion in a metaphysical system. While teaching at Dartmouth in 1927 under the tutelage of Cox, Beecher wrote a letter to his father that poignantly illuminates the cause and nature of his developing faith. He wrote of walking several miles with Cox, talking metaphysics, and finally stopping by a colleague's apartment to listen to recordings of classic American ballads which the Victrola people were doing:

> [A] man sang a weird thing about a dope fiend—"Willie, The Chimney Sweeper"—and it was perfect, because back of the voice I could see the utterly no-count, sentimental, obscene, ogling, pool-parlor lounging jellybean. And I wondered about the songs themselves. . . . Somewhere else the thing would grate numbly—the falseness, triteness. But it isn't that. The songs may be trite, but they aren't *false*. With all the absurd rant about villains and dooms and pure maidens and engineers being found at the throttle amid the wreckage—there is something more—something deep down. The pulse of the people perhaps, and I ache at thinking of all those who have heard and sung those songs and found in them the expression of their own incoherencies. There stands the song itself, raw, jangling . . . quite false and preposterous—but yet invested with an anonymous dignity. They asked God for bread to appease their soul-hunger, and He gave them that song—stone—and they took it for bread—the colossal irony! The pity of it! But, perhaps, the stone becomes bread because of their faith in it. If so, you lose respect for God—but not for the people. (*Papers*, May 25)

Therein lies the source of Beecher's developing faith, a recognition of the dignity of the common people, the masses. And therein a vehicle for communion with them, a faithful rendering of the voices of the silenced masses, anonymous, rising up through the ages to claim for themselves and their posterity their rightful place on this continent and in this society.

A reading of his poetry from the late 1920s illustrates Beecher's changing poetic sensibility and style. "Free verse is dead—free metres are open to those who know how to write poetry," Beecher continued in his August 2 letter to Virginia. Up to that time, he had written little that can be termed free verse. Dissatisfied with his attempts at free meter, he committed himself to a rigorous investigation of the composition of traditionally metered verse—to the task of learning "how to write poetry." Unpublished poems extant in manuscript form in the collected *John Beecher Papers: 1899-1972* indicate the breadth of the poet's interest in the steel industry: "The Open Hearth," "The Sheet Mill," "The Blast Furnace," "The Lime Plant," "To the Last of the Hand-filled Blast Furnaces," "The Mill Office," "Superintendents," "For a Designing Engineer," and "Payday at Ensley." The poet's overriding motivation for the composition of these poems appears to have been to present systematically the entire dynamic process of making steel.

One of the better poems from the period, "The Sheet Mill," employs the Alexandrine line, iambic hexameter, often derided for its sluggishness. The narrative line of this poem, however, powerfully propels the reader forward, and the diction is natural and unpretentious (unlike much from poems of the same period). Inverted syntactic structures, while occasionally cumbersome, generally augment the brooding tone of the piece. Like Dante entering the underworld, the narrator passes from sunlight into a "place obscure," the immense but bounded sheet mill, where figures silhouetted in open doors of heating furnaces toil at sundry fiery tasks with no respite. Striking images are poured molten into poetic mould: "A running negro dragged at heel the sheets live blue / And flicking from their surface sparks to die in air." The narrator becomes aware of a nearby black workman, brooding "perhaps how he would like to throw me in" the acid bath (41). Though pondering the enigma of the worker's plight, the narrator finally emerges from the sheet mill as Dante emerged from his Inferno, sympathetic and enlightened, but, nonetheless, still a distanced observer. Sentimentality and pedantry in the poem are negligible. Quite successfully, the dynamism of the process alone is explored.

Unfortunately, the poetic control displayed in "The Sheet Mill" is not evident in most of the poems mentioned above. A sampling of lines from "The Open Hearth" illustrates the weaknesses to which the poet was still prone:

> Like firecrackers snap
> The drips from spout. The final pot, a foaming cup,
> Inebriates the bath. Ebullient, frothing caps
> In tumult leap and toss, and puffs of flame hiccup
> From peepholes, while the doors disgorge in slithering ropes
> The polychromic slag. Now grinds and lumbers up
> A charging car. The sullen monster mopes
> In harness of electric wire, and slobbers grease
> Upon the floor.

Inversion in the first syntactic unit creates undesirable ambiguity; compare "The drips from spout snap like firecrackers!" Diction is pretentious in such choices as "ebullient" and "polychromic." The personification employed is inappropriate to the subject; "inebriates," "hiccup," and "disgorge" conjure up images of pots of blown converter metal as vomiting drunks. And the charging car, described as a "sullen monster" moping and slobbering grease, approaches pathetic fallacy. The strong poetic qualities of "The Sheet Mill," while within the grasp of the young poet, were not yet within his control; he would struggle for years to gain that control. Moreover, the poetic sensibility that would come to characterize Beecher's work is seldom suggested.

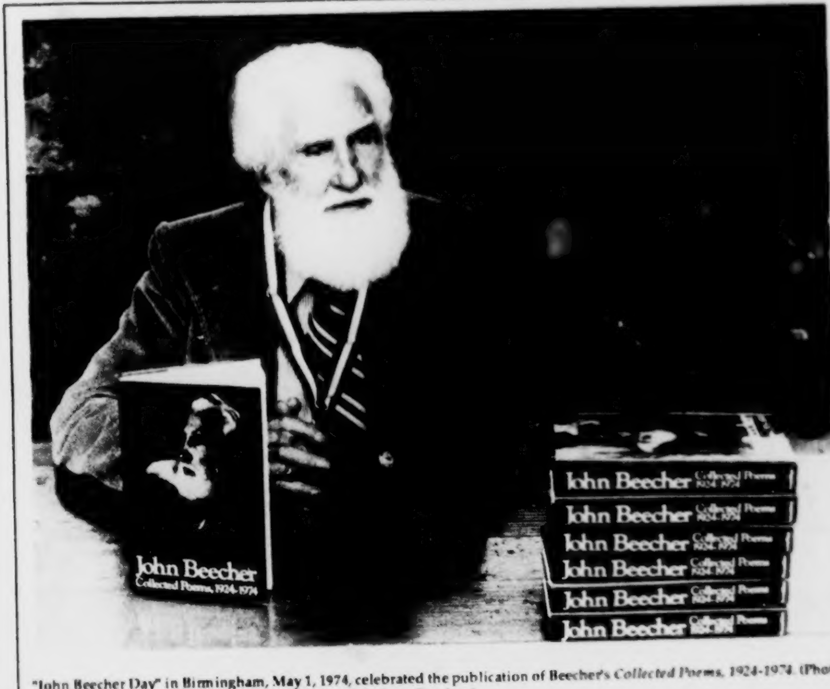
Newly married and traveling extensively throughout Europe in 1927-1928, Beecher experimented with versification skills that relied on dramatic simplification of his previous style. In poems inspired by the architecture of the French countryside, he began to employ the epigram extensively, practicing the skills of compression, clarity, polish, balance, and pointedness. One night in London, in September 1928, while his wife read William Blake's *Songs of Innocence* to him, Beecher was struck by a desire to write poems for children. Recalling an adolescent cousin's preference for a Meccano set over a book the poet gave him for Christmas, Beecher decided to write on the subject that had enamored him since his own youth, the process of making steel and the machinery used. Sixteen extant manuscript poems comprise the sequence titled *Children's Industrials*. Gems exist in the sequence that have never had an audience. "The Skip-Hoist," comparing that piece of machinery to a spider continuously moving up and down a thread, effectively employs repetition to mirror the activity of the machinery. Along with "The Hot Saw" and "The Steam Shovel," "The Skip-Hoist" reflects a child's sheer delight with things mechanical.

The question of whether the *Children's Industrials* was truly intended for an audience of children provides a scholar with an interesting dilemma. The poems were presented as a gift both to Beecher's cousin and to his mother, once a celebrated interpretive reader on the Chautauqua and Lyceum circuits (from whom Beecher seems to have acquired his enhanced appreciation for the sounds and rhythms of the language). Within individual poems, the use of meter and rhyme, metaphor, and polysyndeton should appeal to a young audience. However, as with Blake's *Songs of Innocence*, the irony that pervades many of the poems suggests that an audience of greater sophistication might also have been intended.

"The Coke Ovens" was the first poem of the sequence to be written and serves as a fitting prologue:

> They peep and peer, the oven lights,
> Between the trees on winter nights.
> Like jungle cats they seem to stalk
> With glowing eyes. I wouldn't walk
> Between the trees on winter nights.
> They peep and peer, the oven lights.

Two features of the poem, the use of tropes to enhance meaning and the use of phrase repetition to maximize the contribution of structure, epitomize the compression, polish, and balance essential to the epigram. The last two lines are a mirrored inversion of the first two lines, bounding the middle lines like trees lining a corridor in a jungle. From amongst those trees the oven lights "peep and peer," a personification serving not to alter but to enhance the image of the oven lights, an objective correlative for reality. Bounded by reality is the world of appearances, the simile presented in the middle lines. Jungle cats are powerful, dangerous, and feared predators, an evocative and


John Beecher
Collected Poems, 1924-1974
John Beecher Collected Poems 1924-1974
John Beecher Collected Poems 1924-1974
John Beecher Collected Poems 1924-1974
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John Beecher Collected Poems 1924-1974
John Beecher Collected Poems 1924-1974

"John Beecher Day" in Birmingham, May 1, 1974, celebrated the publication of Beecher's *Collected Poems, 1924-1974*. (Photo by James G. Redd. Courtesy of James Helten and Barbara Beecher.)

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unequivocating simile for the coke ovens. The narrator of the poem warns the reader to avoid the imminent danger of reality just beyond the corridor of appearances, a tacit recognition of the grimness of life in the steel mills and a reversal of the poet's sensibility regarding the industry. The plight of mill workers and their families is addressed repeatedly in this sequence of poems, although somewhat abstrusely. The brooding tone of many of the pieces does not distance the narrator from the human factor in the process (as it had in "The Sheet Mill") but, instead, emanates from the narrator's very consciousness.

The poet's altered sensibility is even more evident in the poem "Down Where the Chimneys Are" which serves as a fitting epilogue for the sequence, postulating the legacy of the mills:

> All day long the whistles call
> Down where the chimneys are.
> And all night long the whistles call,
> For some begin when others are
> through,
> And one day soon they'll be calling
> for you,
> Down where the chimneys are.

The poem affirms the inevitability of a life of labor in the steel mills for the children of current mill workers. The process of making steel feeds on a cycle of socio-economic, educational, and racial disadvantage upon which industry and society of the time were dependent. The line, "And one day soon they'll be calling for you, . . ." is addressed less to an audience of children than to one of responsible adults, Beecher's father included, who might effect some change in existing working conditions. Poetically, the use of brevity, simplicity, and vehemence (often as a twist in the denouement) to achieve the desired artistic and political effect becomes a Beecher trademark.

In 1929, fashioning what he had learned about writing poetry with his steel-making metaphor, he composed "Manifesto":

> Men teem the molten steel in any
> mould;
> It freezes into form. What taxes
> brain
> Is giving it the qualities that hold:
> A tensile strength withstanding
> torque and strain,
> Yet malleable enough to be
> controlled,
> A crystal structure free from weak-
> ness plane.
> The qualities of steel I thus rehearse
> And find in them a parable for verse.

The qualities of good steel—flawless crystal structure, malleability, and tensile strength—have their approximate counterparts in brevity, simplicity, and vehemence and in the characteristics of epigrammatic form— compression, clarity, polish, balance, and pointedness. In bringing those characteristics to his work, Beecher would create more vital and appropriate images, employ a diction more expressive of his subjects, and bequeath a poetic sensibility shaped by an abiding concern and respect for the masses.

Those qualities are aptly exemplified in the third poem of the sequence of his widely acclaimed mock "Report to the Stockholders" first published in *New Masses* in 1933, marking the end of his apprenticeship:

> a ladle burned through
> and he got a shoeful of steel
> so they took up a collection through
> the mill
> and some gave two bits
> and some gave four
> because there's no telling when

The poem communicates as much, if not more, through implication as through exposition. Like the melters he immortalized in his poems, Beecher had learned to tap a good heat of steel.

John Beecher was descended from four generations of colonial New

England blacksmiths, followed by three generations of the most controversial and well-known family of preachers and social reformers in nineteenth-century America. In the twentieth century, in a career to match that of any of his ancestors in personal sacrifice, in contribution, and in controversy, Beecher wedded thought to action, preacher to blacksmith, and with the hammer of Vulcan wrought out, blow on blow, the molten beauty in his brain in permanent, recreative symbols, his poems, which are as original and bold and forceful today as the day they were written.

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John Beecher in Birmingham

Peter Huggins

Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama

I was an accident, you know.
My parents didn't want children.
They were too busy: L.T. making
Money hand over fist at Tennessee
Coal and Iron, Mother reading
On the Chautauqua circuit up north.
No home life, I can tell you that.

Mother tried to make up for it at Christmas,
When I was down from Cornell.
She got me a date with a girl
Of good family and social connection,
As Mother so bluntly put it.
I didn't want to go with the girl.
When Mother insisted, I shaved

My head bald. Mother didn't bat an eye
When she introduced me to the girl.
The poor girl didn't know
What to make of me. I suppose
I looked freakish to her,
Like one of L.T.'s workers emerging
From that dark mill of his.

L.T. didn't appreciate my description.
He mumbled something about the mind
Being its own place. Mother said
He had a gift for picking
Phrases out of context, a gift
That I seem to have inherited.
My fire's in the valley: all I see is me.

The Magical Realism of Mary Ward Brown

Philip D. Beidler

Philip Beidler, Professor of English at the University of Alabama, is the author of American Literature and the Experience of Vietnam *and of articles on American literature from the colonial and classic periods to the present. He is also the editor of* The Art of Fiction in the Heart of Dixie: An Anthology of Alabama Writers. *His edition of William March's* Company K *has recently appeared in the Library of Alabama Classics Series, and one of Harriet Hassell's* Rachel's Children *is forthcoming. His current book project is entitled* Re-Writing America: Vietnam Authors in Their Generation.

After having stories published in literary quarterlies, Mary Ward Brown stopped writing for 25 years to raise her son. Except for the seven years she spent in Auburn while her husband worked at the University, she has spent her life on her family's farm. (Photo courtesy of Read Alabama!)

Mary Ward Brown's prize-winning collection of stories, *Tongues of Flame*, was published by E. P. Dutton/Seymour Lawrence in 1986 to national acclaim by reviewer-critics and fellow writers. "Mary Ward Brown's talent is a true delight and a discovery," wrote Wayne Greenhow in the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution* (103). "Stunning," Joan Williams called her work on the dust jacket of the first edition, "an astonishing performance." Also cited on the dust jacket of the first edition, Leonard Michaels concluded, "the South has been proud of its writers. The stories of Mary Ward Brown will justify that good pride again."

As many reviewers pointed out, the great theme uniting these remarkable stories is change. Set on the landscape of

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a mythified Old South in the throes of becoming an equally mythified New South, they are about "painful transitions" (*Booklist* 1583), "moments of special tension or insight" (*LJ* 105). As Kathryn Morton observed in the *New York Times Book Review*, "each story deals in some way with a person who has been treading a path of inherited or habitual expectations and now, rounding a corner, discovers this is where the sidewalk ends" (6). A young wife dutifully yet guiltily accompanies a dying old terror of a mother-in-law on a shopping trip to buy the dress, it turns out, that the latter plans to be buried in. A country grocer and his wife elect at last to end the ritual humiliation of endlessly supplying provisions on credit to bankrupt gentry for parties to which they are always uninvited. A young woman, mortified in the old, small-town way at being left at the altar, confronts in the invasive nightly glare of an electrified cross erected on a church across the street from her barren apartment the full outrage of her solitary hurt and confusion. A lonely old widower and retired judge, astonished at the unfolding beauty of an exotic flower, opens his home and the quiet privacy of age and decline in the attempt to share of its wonder. Two elderly women, one white and the old mistress of the house, the other black and the old housekeeper-cook, attempt to share the disappointments of age and children across the abyss of history that is the old memory of race. In the title story, a middle-aged farm wife sees her attempted reform of a reprobate old drunk collide with the overheated preaching of a hired evangelist in a climax of literal conflagration.

As these summaries may suggest, in each case personal change here is also clearly a focus and embodiment of larger cultural change as well. The New South here is a land where the essential nature of relationship—social, professional, commercial, familial—is in continuous flux. In the parlor, the church, the store, the great house, the tenant shack, the sickroom, the graveyard, and beyond, there is the shifting of old orders, hierarchies, allegiances, stratifications. People attempt to work across generations, across the divisions of social and economic class, across the changing roles of the sexes, across the ancient boundaries of race. Indeed, we find here repeatedly that what strikes us as very "new" in the New South is almost always so by virtue of also being very "old," and that what strikes us as very "old" about the Old South most often defines itself so through a near-infinite capacity to render itself startlingly new. And in terms relating more distinctly to Southern literary culture, as my title is meant to suggest, something analogous as to the creative juxtaposing of old and new must also be said about Brown's practice of realism, and with consequences placing her work significantly at the forefront of much contemporary fiction at large.

All this juxtaposition occurs in theme and form in a fiction that seems to partake almost exclusively of the literary staples of Southern life and experience. Brown's characters include the fading dowager; the gladhanding aristocrat; the self-made merchant, keeper of community accounts; the judge; the retired housekeeper; the shabby, itinerant evangelist; the spinster; the aging mistress of the house; the old alcoholic physician. Likewise, we respond with common awareness to the age-honored familiarity of their situations: the dramas of social expectation, disappointed love, yearning piety, encroaching decline and death, the interplay of classes and races and generations, the whole apparatus of Southern manners. Yet in the same moment, such situations invariably render themselves as questions, I have suggested, of both matter and manner, almost astonishingly garish and new.

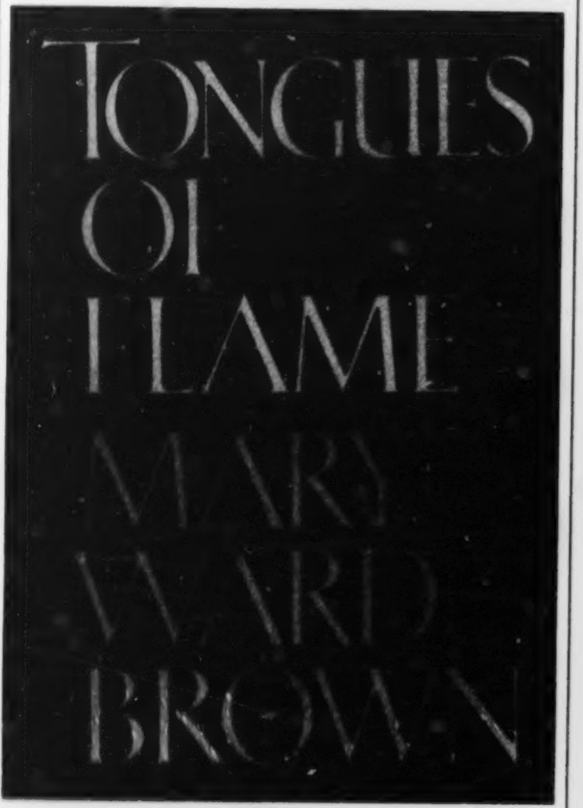
In "The Barbecue," the bankrupt scion of the gentry is named Jefferson Davis Arrington, "a collateral descendant of the President of the Confederacy, and could trace it" (36). The patient storekeeper, Thomas J. Moore, is named for that other Jefferson, "the architect of American democracy," but "no kin whatsoever" (37). The former, relentlessly youthful, blow-dried, driving his white Mercedes, his entire existence mortgaged to the hilt of a squandered patrimony, plays "weekend neighbor" with his camphouse entertainments on the latter's provisions. The latter, husband to "a remarkable woman" (38) and father with a daughter up with Arrington's at Vanderbilt, self-made successful merchant and owner now of "three thousand acres of prime Black Belt Land" (38), finally calls matters to a reckoning. Arrington, ignoring a stack of unpaid bills, has blithely borrowed of Moore even the use of the phone in the latter's place of business to complete the circuits of economic and social irresponsibility. It is one last unbearable humiliation. Accounts are finally settled, but precisely in the resolving of perplexed old relationships comes the equal and perhaps even more unfathomable perplexity of the new. Sitting on his porch, Moore watches the Sunday afternoon procession of barbecue goers, about to be entertained now on some other storekeeper's largesse, in their cars that "were all late models, clean and shining as on parade" (46). Later on, he is awakened in bed by their noise on the return. He tries again to rest. "But it was almost dawn," the story concludes, "before the blackboard of his mind, filled from one end to the other with questions he couldn't even understand, much less answer, was erased at last by sleep" (47).

In "Beyond New Forks," the old housekeeper is named Queen Esther. Dipping snuff and sitting regally in her Sunday best at the traditional place of her station in the back seat of the old mistress's car, she attends the latter on what she knows to be a fool's errand to recruit a granddaughter in her place. The granddaughter appears in "a pink tank top and a short, tight, flowered skirt." On her feet she wears "Jap Flaps." From the cabin, soul music blares forth, silencing all conversation (156-57). The old drama of the changing of the orders becomes an almost surreal heralding of the new. Such is the brave new world of the South, as the title tells us, "Beyond New Forks."

Accordingly, as the above examples themselves may show, change also most significantly embodies itself in *Tongues of Flame* as a complex function of style as well. Here, insistently, the real, the world we know, the place in which we attempt to live, is always both itself and the shadow of the other. Hence, in fact, the deliberate ambiguity of the title of this critical overview: "The Magical Realism of Mary Ward Brown." These stories as stories are always themselves magical in ways at once very old and very new. On one hand, they are magical in the old sense of the way stories have always been magical. They are magical, that is, in the old sense embodied in Joan Didion's precept that "we tell stories in order to live" (11), or in Nietzsche's dictum that "art is not an imitation of nature but its metaphysical supplement, raised up against it in order to overcome it" (142). They trade deliberately on wonder and mystery, offer gateways to a world of myth, ritual, totem, taboo. They are the work of the singer of legends, the village story-teller, keeper and creator of the memory of the race.

On the other hand, however, they are magical in the new sense of what has often been called, in some inclusive sense, "magical" realism, the post-modern realism, for instance of Borges, Kundera, Marquez, Calvino. (And I do want to stress the idea of inclusive definition. In these stories, people do not grow to be 200 years old or suddenly develop the ability to fly—although one often gets the feeling that they could, and I would suggest that is just the point.) What we have here are fictions of presence, irruptions of the magical and other into the fabric of our lives, a realism in which the world of the here and now can also become once again a place of charms, omens, portents, and spells, a place of new entry back into some older sense of whole relation to the world, and apace a medium of a new recovery of possibilities of value and belief, of custom, usage, tradition, and observance. In them is made possible a going ahead that is a return, as well as a return that is a going ahead. It is done so in large measure through conscious recreation of the old familiar shadow-world of allegory—the meeting ground of the immanent and the transcendent, the here and now and the there and then, at once present, past, and future. It is the "world" of the Bible, of the great medieval romances, of Shakespeare, of Spenser, and of Hawthorne, as well as the "world" of more immediate Alabama counterparts such as William March, Harper Lee, Cecil Dawkins, Mark Childress, and others. It is a medium of literature as new and as old as the search for explanation that is the meaning and measure of true community.

How this is done in *Tongues of Flame* has been to date, I believe, even in the midst of all the accolade, the source of significant critical misunderstanding. What has been missing in most accounts of style, indeed, is a sense of the deliberate element of spiritual mystery. Various reviewers, for instance, establishing their baseline references to "the New South," "not the Old South," "the modern South," "the South of today," and thereby invoking the attendant critical expectations have seemed to search in vain for a hard edge, an "emotional toughness" (*PW* 91), as one reviewer called it. Presumably, this edge is something like the requisite grotesquerie of a Eudora Welty or a Flannery O'Connor or the black humor grandstanding of a Harry Crews or a Barry Hannah. These stories, reviewers note in contrast, are "unpretentious," "competent" and "straightforward"



The fiction of Mary Ward Brown of Browns, Alabama, had already been recognized by inclusion in *Best American Short Stories* before her collection *Tongues of Flame* won the 1987 PEN/Ernest Hemingway Foundation Award. (Courtesy of E. P. Dutton/ Seymore Lawrence. Jacket design by David Gatti.)

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(Smith 104-05), "sensitive but conventional" (*Kirkus* 732), "well written and delivered in a measured, caring voice unhinted at by the book's flamboyant title" (Morton 6). Accordingly, reviewers have projected at times a praise mingled with a kind of benign condescension. Applauding Brown's use of "ordinary characters confronting life's painful transitions with courage and dignity" and her demonstration of "how lives are fortified by tradition, interdependence, and a sense of continuity," reviewers describe the collection as "a welcome change from the slick urban stories now in fashion" (*BL* 1583). Or they turn to more elaborate figures. "This is the South," one reviewer most egregiously concludes, "where everyone is expected to behave himself, where people know who they are, and where good family recipes are handed down. Mary Ward Brown writes like a woman offering warm homemade bread" (Morton 6).

In this same vein, however, one reviewer, in describing the especially masterful tale entitled "Disturber of the Peace," also clearly touches on the key. "Straight through," the reviewer concludes, "Brown here resists symbol—which has the effect of increasing the strange humor as well as accentuating the plight" (*Kirkus* 733). This comment, I believe, is a fair summary of stylistic practice throughout Brown's work: a calculated resistance to the intellectualizing tendency of the modern traditionally invested in the modern conception of the literary symbol; and an achievement thereby of something at once both much older and much newer. Brown's work is in a single moment as old, as I have suggested, as the literature of antiquity, and as new as Hawthorne, Chekov, Kafka, Borges (and, as one reviewer astutely noted, perhaps in most immediate connection here, Katherine Anne Porter).

To put it in a word, Brown's method is not so much symbolic as perhaps talismanic or iconic; it deals in the magic, that is, residing in present things, our sense of the close otherness of our lives and of our perceptions, of the visible sign and spirit-presence embodied in the phenomenal universe and in our relationship with it. It is a fiction of small epiphanies and quiet recognitions, of close concern for the observed particular and the intensity of felt experience. Mrs. Worthy's cockeyed hat, for instance, in "New Dresses," as she lies passed out on the fitting room couch, and her daughter-in-law's attempt to adjust it are at once funny and moving and dreadful, as is the image in "Beyond New Forks" of old shrunken black Grandma Queen in her Sunday dress holding a can of beer, or in "The Barbecue," of Tom Moore's somber blue eye, "locked" forever "in a different direction from that of the other . . . as if trying to see the bridge of his own nose" (35). But what one senses most profoundly is how incredibly these visitations of the visionary moment are simply there, iconic details in the very fact of their sheer here-and-now otherness sounding the depths of here-and-now reality. It is, in sum, a new allegory of the commonplace, the presence-world of signs, the shadow iconography of our daily lives.

Allegory. In Brown's stories, as if by dictionary definition we know it in all its quiet, elliptical mystery: the writing of one thing under the sign of another. While the method is evident in most of the tales, in three its new marriage with post-modern realism seems most peculiarly arresting and pronounced: "The Amaryllis," "Disturber of the Peace," and, the title selection, "Tongues of Flame."

In "The Amaryllis," the dominating visitation of presence indicated in the title is noted from the story's opening word onward. "It." "It came to be the first thing he thought of each morning," we are told in the initial sentences. "What did it do overnight?" (93). "It," of course, is the flower itself, a spectacle of a "glowing red" in the fullness of bloom.

> The whole thing was so beautiful it had come to dominate the entire house. It was not only alive but dramatically alive. It had presence, almost like a person, and he was conscious of it off and on all day. More and more, however, it seemed to be asking something of him, he wasn't sure what. (92-94)

"He," we learn shortly, is James Manderville, the retired judge, an old widower alone with his solitude and memories. And his story is of the plant whereby he gets "the message," as he senses it, to open his life and share his astonished wonder at the thing and its beauty.

Here, from the outset, in the presence of the story's master-icon, we are on the familiar shadow ground of allegory, as old as literature, as new as this morning's bloom of a remarkable exotic flower. It is the strange fruit of Rappaccini's garden; it is the visitation in the everyday routine of things of the Borgesian angel plopped down and muddy in the chicken-yard. Here it is pure presence, a call to rapt contemplation, perhaps even worship. "Sitting there in absolute silence," we are told of the plant, "it projected pressure through the walls" (98). And shortly, the narrator adds, "It was simply there in all its glory, however fleeting." It was the fleetingness, the judge decides moreover, "that put on the pressure" (99).

The flower calls for "appreciators," and the old judge tries them all, the "elect" he calls them as he hurriedly prepares his lists (101): Pot, his faithful black house man; his old friend and birthday guest McGowin; Eddie the postman; the Buick dealer and his wife, nearby neighbors; the pantsuited woman owner of the flower shop; the young lawyers with their wives and children. Through an entire long exhausting day, the procession comes and goes. Some understand not at all, others in varying degrees of devotion. "Makes you feel like you ought to go down on your knees, don't it judge?" (101), offers old Pot. "Long live the big petunia—or whatever the hell its name is" (105), chortles McGowin after a big lunch that the two have eaten with something like the happy vigor and zest of old.

Apace, Manderville himself attempts to unriddle the mystery. Opening another day of his solitary routine of old age, he has begun to sort through old papers, letters, scrapbooks, diaries, accounts. In one notebook, he finds the cryptic jottings of his lost beloved wife, a great reader who had been in the habit of looking up words she did not know. Among her notations he finds various words, "*deciduous, synecdoche*, and *ankh*, all with meanings" (97). Then he finds one without: *ubi sunt*. Its mystery transfixes him. Why was it left alone, he wonders? "What did it mean: Out of context, he had no idea" (97). Only later, as evening comes on and he returns to his studies, does something like a context strangely begin to emerge. In the face of a mysterious new reality that has come into his life, it as if he now, somehow afoot in the equal mystery of language, is also beginning to find words for it. He looks up a dictionary definition of *ubi sunt* and finds that it means having to do with "the transitory nature of life and beauty" (106).

Shortly, the young lawyers and their wives begin to appear, and among them a child who turns out to be perhaps the archetypal "appreciator." She wants to touch the plant, kiss it, take it with her. "I want it," she cries out, "I want to take it to my home" (109). She is at once the imp of the air (one thinks immediately, for instance, of Hawthorne's Pearl) and an unruly child speaking the mystery of revelation. "*Ubi sunt*": a message from a dead wife. "I want it": the bratty outcry of a squalling child. Here, in the presence of spirit, we witness the mysterious, magical convergences of things and words, words and things. Shortly and predictably, after all the departures, in the days that ensue there come the inevitable fading of the bloom and the onset of rapid decline. Yet the sense remains that we have been for one brief period at least truly present for a moment of the vast mystery of creation as eternally present as our attempt to find the words to speak it.

At the end, the old judge is instructed "to leave the pot in the pantry and forget it until next year, when he could bring it out, start watering, and the amaryllis would grow and bloom again." The narrator goes on: "It seemed incredible, but all the gardeners and flower people assured him it was true" (111).

In "Disturber of the Peace," the master-icon is not of the garden but of the city: a garish, artificial, electrified cross. Jeanette McNeil Martin, spinster newly made, forsaken at the altar at the last moment by her beloved Frank for an executive secretary he has met on a CPA trip to New Orleans, and now just forsaken in general, sits alone on Easter eve in her World War II-vintage apartment, nursing her solitary misery, the initial pain and anger of it all reduced now to a bumbling liaison with a feckless young married doctor, 19 pounds of overweight, and the pills that get her through the night. Then, suddenly, it is there:

> "Oh!" she whispered. "Oh, no!"
>
> A cross, at least five feet tall, had been put up on the Methodist Church, across the street and on the corner. It was defined by rows of burning light bulbs that lit up the darkness and brought to life the church and street below. It was positioned not at the top of the steeple but at its square base, where a bell used to be. Its rays seemed obliquely aimed at her windows. (53)

"No," she thinks. "She did not deserve the lighted cross. And how could she sleep with it shining in her face?" (54). Sleepless nights are her general problem, and now this. It displaces even Frank:

> In her mind's eye it glowed as at night. Its afterimage seemed to send out rays. It filled her whole consciousness so that her self, cowed and reduced, could not find a comfortable place in relation. She pictured her small self bowed down at the foot, then off to one side. Neither place seemed right. The cross was asking something of her, but even in imagination she could not see herself pick it up to carry. It was disproportionately large, for one thing, and also attached to the steeple. Did it want a corpus? She had been through that already, months ago. Was there more? (55)

And here again, as in the sense of visitation that pervades "The Amaryllis," is the point, the point not of symbol but of mystery in corporeality. In this story and the life of consciousness it depicts, the sudden appearance of an electrified cross is not a symbolic abstraction but an embodiment, an utter, totalizing presence. Her family tries to explain it away rationally—it has been erected by a prominent Methodist family, it turns out, as a memorial. They try to explain it away with humor, something they can perhaps get the Klan to come burn (56), or as "a freak thing, like an accident" (57). Jeanette knows better. "But you all don't understand," she calls out in reply, "I can't stand the cross" (57). Now, she begins to understand the full burden, the cross she literally has to bear, of mystery and visitation. It is the burden of nothing less than "a different reality from that of her normal, happy relatives and even from her former self. And over her reality, hardly endurable before, now loomed a cross—garish and artificial, but still a cross" (57).

Now at night, she sits and waits for it to come on. Her mother has tried calling the minister. She tries calling Frank, himself a prominent member of the Methodist faithful. It all fails, along with, as we see Jeanette sitting at the last, all the rest of the fading impedimenta of the world, a dog's bark, the voice of a child, a door slamming, the sounds of young people "laughing, talking, calling out to one another," a congregation singing an Easter hymn (61). There remains only the whole mystery of presence, that which renders us elemental and silent. At the end we are told:

> Inside her room darkness came sooner than out, where daylight lingered. As it faded, light from the cross seemed to materialize, gather strength, and focus upon her. She no longer tried to escape. Like an animal picked out of darkness by the hunter's light, she stared into the heart of it, mesmerized and blind. (61)

The master-icon in "Tongues of Flame" is of course the fire itself embodied in the title. And at a certain level of understanding, as with the foregoing tales, we seem to be offered license to trace out at least suggestions of a high symbology. The tale is after all, about a visiting evangelist hotly working his pentecostal trade at a country church. We just have to remember as well that it is also a story about a middle-aged country woman and her husband and their attempt to reform a sad old alcoholic who, after hearing a particularly pointed sermon, winds up getting drunk and burning down the church with an unextinguished cigarette. The point here, as in much of Brown's profoundly religious fiction is that the there and then is truly there and then. But it is only there and then to the degree that it is precisely here and now. The story is about symbology exactly to the degree that it is in fact about the indwelling of the Spirit of the Lord. So even the evangelist Zack Benefield seems to sense, for instance, on the fated eve. "God's Holy Spirit is here tonight, my friends," he intones. "I never felt it more strongly in my ministry." It is so much there, in fact, that he chooses to discard his prepared text. "I'm going to forget about the sermon I prepared for you," he tells the congregation. "I'm going to talk about something else entirely. I'm going to go where the spirit leads me" (85).

And again we ourselves prepare to be led toward yet another moment of the strange vectoring convergences of words and things in earthly revelation. The sermon concluded, the congregation disperses, E. L. the drunk in a sudden, mysterious disappearance, Dovey Goodwin, his would-be reformer, and her husband Floyd, home and to bed. Suddenly, fire alarm bells ring out in the night. Gathering buckets, the Goodwins rush anxiously back in their truck toward the glow in the sky. Then, they see:

> Tongues of flame, in billowing smoke, leapt into the dark sky before them. The flames were red-gold and glowing, with sparks shooting off in the night like fireworks. All around was a reddish haze and, in the air, a malignant crackle.
>
> "Lord God," Floyd said when the blaze came in sight, "It's the church!" (89)

The characters see, and we see, with the emphasis on seeing in all the senses that word makes possible, but first and foremost in its utter literality. "Tongues of flame." It is the first and only time the phrase is used in the story, and it is used *as pure description*. Again, in the absolute fusion of the literal and the symbolic lies exactly the point. Precisely as we describe do we become stunned interpreters, the language of pentecost afoot in commonplace revelation. In this dreadfully moving and funny story, meaning is always, as suggested at the conclusion, a joke on the symbol, the strange collidings of the names and the signs, the queer logos arising out of the hubbub and bustle of experience, the babble of our lives. "I've been accused of preaching hell and brimstone all my life," Benefield jokes to the Goodwins as, having deposited E. L. in his bed, the three of them drive back toward the town. "But that's the first time I ever set a church afire" (92). When Floyd gets the joke, he cannot stop laughing, and his laughing in turn sets off Benefield again. "Yes, sir," Floyd finally manages to spit out, "You outpreached yourself that time!" (92). Meanwhile, Dovey sits silent, looks beyond. For her, as for Brown's other primary interpreters in the astonished moments of their lives, it is a fire of the mind, beyond joke or symbol or any other form of earthly explanation, the presence of the Lord, the great, abiding mystery of things. "Dovey did not join in the laughter," we are told in conclusion:

> She saw nothing funny in anything, anywhere. Staring before her in the gray, breaking dawn, she felt she had never been through such a night in her life. Her mind still blazed out of control, and there was no one to put it out for her. Not Floyd. Not the preacher. No one. (92)

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Andrew Hudgins, who grew up in Montgomery and who teaches now at the University of Cincinnati, has published two books of poetry, *Saints and Strangers* which was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize, and *After the Lost War* (Photo courtesy of Read Alabama!)

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The Voices and the Prayers of Andrew Hudgins

Randall Curb

Randall Curb lives in Greensboro, Alabama—the town in which he was born. He attended the University of Montevallo and the University of Alabama, taught for several years, and currently works at the Hale County Library, where he conducts seminars in American literature and other topics and nourishes a lifelong passion for reading.

In the rich, remarkable poetry of Andrew Hudgins, we hear a variety of urgent and often prayerful voices that must be attended to, however far away they may initially seem. Most of them are not familiar voices, nor do they always speak to us in comfortable ways. Often they carry across the distant geography of other, alien times, coming persuasively into our harsh century from places we have glimpsed only in the stories of our youth, Bible lessons and sermon exempla, history texts, Italian paintings, summer-dusk sessions with our elders. Sometimes the voices sound so intensely private that we are a little abashed as we listen; they are soaked in such deeply felt emotions—love and grief, pain and desire, joy. Yet however harrowing the emotion, the voices are almost supernaturally clear and distinct. They are precise and they are certain. They have been given the practiced articulateness of a poet intent upon having them believed and understood. That is a hallmark of Hudgins's craft. In a quotation cited on the dust jacket of *After the Lost War*, one of his admirers, the poet Rodney Jones, has called Andrew Hudgins "the most readable poet of his generation," and it is Hudgins's relentless clarity that earns him such a tribute. His best poems never fuzz at the edges; his voices never trail off like weak radio signals. Their directness, in addition to the compelling stories they tell, impels us line to line. These voices, usually from places that have scarcely, if ever, touched us before, become for a while a part of our shared personal histories. Hudgins insists on our attention, but he doesn't need rhetoric to get it. He has other, slyer means, and that is where both his art and his originality lie.

Andrew Hudgins has published two books thus far—*Saints and Strangers* and *After the Lost War: A Narrative*. The former, a collection in the usual sense, was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize; the latter, of a different formal stripe, has received considerable but insufficient praise. A third book, in progress, is expected within the next year. Hudgins's work has appeared in virtually every significant poetry-publishing journal in America, he has published essays and some fiction (notably for *Southern Review* and *Hudson Review*), and he has taught at a growing number of universities across the country. With a BA from Huntingdon College, an MA from the University of Alabama, and an

MFA from the Iowa writing program, he is now on the faculty of the University of Cincinnati and teaches both literature and writing classes. Born in Texas and raised in Montgomery, he is also, unmistakably, a Southern poet—not in the cloying "professional Southerner" manner of many today but in the natural, authentic way that Robert Frost was a New England poet. Hudgins has in fact many affinities with Frost—his dramatic use of monologue, his insistence on meter, his unpretentious diction—and some with that other New Englander, Robert Lowell, as well. But he is Southern in every sinew.

Early in his career, Hudgins had a name for the disparate voices he uses. He called them "aliases"—a word not to be applied in the sense of "disguises" (that would denote trickery, sham) but in a sense that helps define him as a poet. His aliases are his discoveries of self and of vital truths through fully imagined moments in the borrowed lives of others. In *Saints and Strangers* the aliases include a coal stoker in Mississippi, John James Audubon, a concubine of King Solomon, the Biblical eunuch Ashpenaz (from the story of Daniel), Jonathan Edwards, Zelda Fitzgerald, Judith's unlucky lover Holofernes, and, perhaps most memorable, the troubled daughter of a Southern revivalist preacher, in the book's title sequence. These characters are not used in any exploitative way. The historical ones are not vulgarly updated so that we might "identify" with them.

Hudgins's language is not technically showy, and the voices don't come to us in some specious approximation of the speech of their time. This unpretentiousness appears even when the first person is used, as in the poem about Edwards called "Awaiting Winter Visitors." Here he uses the Puritan minister's voice in such a subtly convincing way that it seems both eighteenth-century ("From that day on we have rejoyced") and twentieth-century at once. The poem's first stanza reads:

> When thunder fell in Tinsley's
>   pasture
> we recognized a sign from heaven.
> From that day on we have rejoyced
> that God has not forsaken us:
> A blast upon the wavering wheat
> is God's lean son walking ghost—
> colored through our bodies, saying,
> *Yours is a famine of the soul.* (italics
> Hudgins's)

The imagery of these lines is typical of Hudgins: complex but clean, difficult but not obscure, controlled. Both Jesus and, implicitly, the voice of Jesus are compared to the thunder, and then within that double metaphor is the very body of Christ, seen as though it were not body but soul, "walking . . . through" *us*, a chiding presence within our own souls and bodies. It is a stunning passage. Almost incomprehensible rationally, it reaches to heart and nerve. All from the imagined voice of Edwards (the poem concludes, "I shall retire and read St. Paul, / who called the human corpse a seed"), the poem challenges both intellect and sensibility. The centuries meet. The ironies of faith and the faith in irony (our age!) go hand in hand.

There are many other aliases in the book, and some of the voices are more laconic. In "Holofernes Reminisces After Three Thousand Years" (one of Hudgins's dandier titles), the language is eloquently spare: "Mine is the oldest story / in the world: a man who wields / great power finds the woman / who exists for him to wonder over." He speaks of only a few tellingly seductive details of this woman's appearance — "sandals / bracelets / brown flash"— and she is never named. "The world knows only / her side," he says, and he, her victim, is "a man of merely great power" who, drunk, exchanged one night of pleasure "for a woman's sword." The staccato, choked voice of this poem is perfectly synchronized with the swift act of violence that must, historically, end it. The reminiscence gets cut rather short.

In this first book of Hudgins there is no overlooking the double theme of sex and violence. The powerful monologue "One of Solomon's Concubines, Dying, Exults in Her Virginity," explores this theme in the virgin's voice. She has escaped intercourse with the king by way of hysteria, and he sends for "another, calmer virgin." While he is enjoying her replacement, the virgin learns the truth of her hysterical premonition that "something is burning." She reports:

> That very night inside the walls
> an olive merchant's son burst into flames,
> ran shrieking up the midnight streets,
> and died not fifty feet from here.

Chaste, she lives on, knowing "my flesh is wholly mine."

Variations on this theme occur in poems with a contemporary subject and voice as well. In "Claims" the speaker is given no name and only an implied (masculine) gender. The poem is first person, but that person might easily be you or me. The poem begins: "It's boys who find the bodies in the woods / and mostly boys who put them there." "Them" are girls' bodies, "naked, dead, and rotting." They are found near the speaker's house, and, taking them away, the police are "more gentle than they'd be with living girls." The innocent speaker feels grief as guilt, "[a]nd sometimes when I've drunk too much / and I'm having trouble sleeping, I love those girls / those dead strangers, more than I love anyone." That is an emotional claim in some sense stronger than the sudden violent brutality of rape and murder.

Such provocative, sexually loaded poems have nothing to do with love, however—which Hudgins treats in a variety of tones and aliases. In "Mary Magdalene's Left Foot"—a poem that begins with bantering mock-blasphemy — we're told "The news is littered with the bodies of women /—whores some—" before we are reminded of "the whore who washed Christ's feet with tears, . . . knowing that it was God's clear flesh beneath / its human dying." The contrast and the movement from impious humor to sexual violence to an ultimate definition of love are astonishingly affecting. And in "Returning Home to Babylon," the poem about Daniel and the eunuch Ashpenaz, the unspeakable love that is not consummated "is even more dangerous / than lust or force. It can lead you to do / nothing." That poem, the most exotic and perhaps most complicated in the book, is full of dreams, of mystery and longing, of the paradoxes of one man attempting to understand another. A much more open poem is "Sotto Voce," written straightforwardly without an alias. Here we are plunged into the familiar position of eavesdropper. The speaker is standing in a college library ("staring at the German books") near a public telephone. He overhears a conversation—or one end of it—that a girl is having with her boyfriend in Texas. The relationship is at a crisis, and as the speaker listens he becomes more and more involved, even a bit infatuated. The girl, shredding tissues on the floor as she talks, become desirable. But it is a sad conversation; the two are breaking up: "For a few moments more she whispers / into the phone, then stops to listen. *Regret* / is the only word that I can make out clearly." Yet after she hangs up, she leaves the room smiling, and the speaker's memory of her fades quickly. No one has really loved after all (unless it's the boy in El Paso), no one has genuinely suffered, no one has lost. In other words, there have been no complications—the very essence of true love.

In *Saints and Strangers* there are two "Montgomery" poems, and together with the title sequence, they are probably the strongest in the book. All are written in very distinctive voices. Hudgins's aliases, it should be clear by now, are about as likely to be female as male, and with one of them being the iconically feminine Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald, he could be on treacherous ground. But the poem about her, called "Zelda Sayre [note the maiden name] in Montgomery: 1942," is one of the finest and most convincing he has written. His is the "mad Zelda," still remembered by some Montgomerians, who walked the city's streets with her Bible, the poor butterfly who has put her dancing and her dreams and her dead husband behind her. Now she still attempts to paint, though, and she loves flowers—"azaleas, tulips, japonica, and such."

> But the human world is so distressed
> I imagine people coming by at night
> to yank them up. I see their oblong heads
> open with the mad laughter and large eyes
> of devils fleeing from a Bosch canvas.

Living alone with her mother, she loves the peach trees across the street and says she has "had worse lovers." Now so sensitively pious she doesn't have "the nerve" to paint dogwood (the tree of the Crucifixion legend), she compares herself to the early bee who, deceived by a false spring, lies helpless in the March snow. She receives communion wearing a calla lily in her hair. The fierce intelligence once too unbridled for faith, much less orthodoxy, now sees God everywhere. And as it is Palm Sunday in Montgomery, Christ's passion is the keenest passion she knows. "[T]he pyracantha on the table" mocks Jesus's crown of thorns and so it is thrown out. Zelda's pain seems to be her only solace; it is almost the only thing that makes sense. By the end of the poem Hudgins the poet has completely disappeared inside his portrait of a woman so bravely mad. (It is a remarkable feat of negative capability.) Digging in her garden at the poem's close, Zelda spears a frog with her fork. Weeping over her unintended cruelty, she says, "It looked just like El Greco's Christ. The legs." Simultaneously comic and movingly pathetic, that last line is a brilliant stroke. For somewhere inside her defeated self the would-be artist faintly lives, not quite usurped by God.

God and *Jesus* are not words Andrew Hudgins shies away from, nor does he merely flirt with their implications. For his time, he is a courageously religious poet, mind and soul. The Biblical stories from which he draws subjects and voices are not mere plunder for his creative machine; they are clearly endemic to his imagination. His St. Francis, trying diligently to make friends with Brother Fire, is as credibly (and earnestly) evoked as his Zelda. But the interest doesn't stop there. Hudgins's most personal, most characteristic, and, to my mind, greatest themes are religious ones: mortality and the question mark that is eternity, the nature of sin (its very real existence is a given), the tricky business of sex, the non-banality of evil, the wondrous contradictions in Creation. In several poems in his first book, he looks eagle-eyed at the natural world God has put at our doorstep and his response is a baffled awe. As he says in the voice of Audubon, who is examining a bittern, "Bedamned if I know what to make of that." Such unanswerable bafflement never diminishes the awe, however. No, it deepens it.

Wonder, anxiety, fear, and resignation over religion are all heard in the last voice in *Saints and Strangers*. Once again it is the voice of a woman, who speaks through a sequence of eight poems that, collectively, give the book its title. In the very first of these, "At the Piano," we hear the key line that reverberates through all of them: "Christians are saints and strangers in the world." Each poem then tells a different story (all related in first person) from the life of the woman and her father, a hellfire tent-revival preacher who spends most of his career on the road. In the first six poems the woman—her name is, significantly, Marie—remembers her life with Daddy as they traveled the circuit, when she was a girl developing into a young woman. In the last two she is married (for the second time) and taking care of her sick, deluded father. She is by then an Episcopalian and, though "Daddy . . . shudders when I take the host," has left behind the fear-and-trembling emotionalism of her father's salvation tactics.

Having seen what she has seen—when she's 12 the preacher is "beaten to a pulp" by drunks "while thirty old women and sixteen men / sat slack-jawed in their folding chairs and watched"—and having fainted, at one meeting, from the terror that no one would "come up" and get saved, this woman could easily have turned on her father and his demanding God and abandoned them both. Episcopalian or no, she does not. At the end of the last poem, the family are all at the table, the blessing is said and the meat carved, "and Daddy takes the bowl and helps his plate." All that is resolved and all that can be resolved, here below anyway, is the continuation of life. Each one may be a stranger in a strange and baffling world, but no one is hopelessly lost, and sainthood, in all its confusing varieties, can be mighty hard to shake off.

One poem from *Saints and Strangers* reappears in Hudgins's second book, and for good reason. The second "Montgomery" poem alluded to earlier is "Sidney Lanier in Montgomery: August 1866," retitled "After the Lost War" and thus providing the title for the book. Written in the Georgia-born poet's voice, it is a long, meditative poem about many things—loneliness, defeat, the vocation of the writer, the consolations and the enigmas of nature, the weird beauty that sometimes bursts from violence. That last theme finds its symbol in a brazen act of perverse fascination. Walking along the banks of the Alabama River after dark, Lanier sees "flaring birds / that arch across the late-night sky." They are buzzards that drunken sailors have lured with pieces of meat, caught, soaked with kerosene, torched, and "then launch[ed] into the evening sky." Feeling in this sight both exhilaration and a horror somewhat mollified by the worse horrors of the war he has just survived, Lanier thinks:

> For them [the birds] it must be
>   hideous
> but from the ground it's beautiful—
> in some odd way an easement of
> the savage tedium of days.
> But more than that: perhaps you
>   know,
> with the younger generation of the
>   South
> after the lost war, pretty much
> the whole of life has been not dying.
> And that is why, I think, for me
> it is a comfort just to see
> the deathbird fly so prettily.

This is, needless to say, an unforgettable image, and the plain, succinct masculine rhyme of the last three lines—a device so uncharacteristic of Hudgins's poetry—locks it in with chilling simplicity. Reading this great poem and hearing the strong resonance of Lanier's voice, you know the poet is onto something. And so he is. All of *After the Lost War*—44 poems—is written in the same urgent voice.

Devoting such a body of work to a single alias, Hudgins understandably feels the need to provide some justification. In a brief preface he explains that the voice of Lanier he uses will not sound familiar to those who have read the poet's words, for he has taken the facts of Lanier's life—"more or less"—"to see how I might have lived it if it had been mine." He is after something, then, with much greater amplitude than even the "Saints and Strangers" sequence. What makes *After the Lost War* a magnificent success, and Hudgins's strongest accomplishment to date, is the sustained, seamless sympathy between the poet and this voice that he has partly appropriated, partly invented, and wholly subsumed. Sidney Lanier is not his mouthpiece but his *dopplegänger*. Nor is that other old literary cliché—*mon frère mon semblable*—unfitting.

After the Lost War is subtitled *A Narrative*, and though there are a number of flashbacks to the boy Lanier, there is a quasi-biographical progression from Lanier's years as a Confederate soldier, through his marriage and postwar travels, to his last years and his death. The book has a satisfying formal symmetry, and the four sections into which it is divided are like four acts in a play. A deeper continuity and pattern are established by the severally integrated "marsh" poems. They are, in the order of appearance: "Child on the Marsh," "A Soldier on the Marsh," "A Husband on the Marsh," "A Father on the Marsh," and "A Christian on the Marsh." Each of these is different in tone and character. Yet appearing strategically as they do, they are like plateaus occupied by the lone figure of Lanier, a not overly remarkable man quite remarkably cognizant of his mortality. Literally, of course, marshes are the very opposite of plateaus, and that opposition seems to be part of the point. In "A Husband on the Marsh," Lanier says:

> I'm lost . . .
> . . . Well, not exactly lost.
> Over scrub pines, I recognize
> a cypress that's not too far from the road
> back home. I know the marsh too well.
> I can't get lost—unlike when I
> was just a child. With longer legs,
> I see above sawgrass. I know
> the stars. . . .

The boggy marsh serves Hudgins's purpose far better than any mountaintop. Whatever insight is found is found through mud and water and blood and mire; there are no bolts from the clear blue. And from such ignoble terrain the sound of birdsong is all the sweeter.

One of the epigraphs Hudgins chose for *After the Lost War* is from Shakespeare's sonnet 119. Part of it reads: "O benefit of ill! Now I find true/ That better is by evil still made better." The echo of those lines resonates throughout the book and through much of Hudgins's other poetry as well. Perhaps above all else, the Lanier that Hudgins has created is a witness, and much of what he sees and reflects on is horrible, cruel, grotesque, evil. The war poems are littered with corpses and rotting flesh, and even afterward Lanier is confronted with violence—those flaming birds—and wounds and pus.

In "Postcards of the Hanging," he sees a lynching that is described in heartbreaking detail. Death he sees as marked by the scavenging of flies. His own long illness impresses us with great pathos as it cruelly, gradually overtakes him. Even as a child Lanier was drawn to witness. In "On the Killing Floor," he gets switched "with a green althea switch" (the worst kind) and told by his mother *"Don't be so curious"* (italics Hudgins's) after he follows a cow into the slaughterhouse. Only four years old, he holds onto the heifer's tail while "the nine-pound hammer" does its work.

In "Burial Detail" he discusses a time years later, when he is digging graves for dead soldiers and layering the corpses with lime ("like frosting") between them. It is arduous work, full of sweat and stench, and at one point Lanier, not uniquely, faints. Revived, he continues to dig, through the night. Unafraid of bodily decay, he "take[s] great comfort in knowing I will rot / and that the chest I once stood on / is indistinguishable from other soil / and I will be indistinguishable from it." The poem might have ended on that peaceful downstroke. Instead there is a final stanza that begins:

> But standing there, looking out of the grave,

eyes barely above the lip of earth, I
saw
the most beautiful thing I've ever
seen:
dawn on the field after the Wilderness.
The bodies, in dawn light, were
simply forms;
the landscape seemed abstract,
unreal.

There are many such reprieves, however momentary, in these poems. They are often intervals of light, whatever the source. In the context of the manifold sorrows in which Lanier finds them they are "still made better." Yet they are only reprieves, intervals that for a time give a strength that can come from beauty. After that miraculous dawn, ". . . the sun broke from the horizon soon enough / and we could see exactly what we'd done." The natural world gives its peculiar consolations, but rarely does it sympathize. We must not expect it to.

There is a marvelous and honest conceit offered by the life of Lanier as subject. In addition to being a soldier and a poet, Lanier was a musician, a flute-player. There is in fact more of Lanier as flutist than as poet in the book. The flute gave Lanier *his* artistic voice—at least in this account—and it is the flute's light but frequently melancholy timbre that is so often counterpoint to the death and ugliness, and especially to the domestic poverty, in Lanier's life. His flute goes with him everywhere, in all his restless travels both during and after the war. He uses it to woo, to help him endure lonely days away from his wife and family, and to console. And when we are not hearing the flute itself, we hear its equivalent in nature. Birds—their arching flights, their sweet calls, and their raucous cawing—are omnipresent voices in the book. Each bird is given its due, like the bobwhite "in redbuds beyond burnt ground" that sings "its stupid, cheerful name." And not just birds—these poems teem with hornets, "black wasps like armored angels," chickens, howling dogs, flies ("Listen!"), mosquitoes, loggerhead turtles. It is a wildly populated world in which the month seems usually to be August, when things are over-ripe and living creatures appear frantic, desperate. There is a lovely poem in *Saints and Strangers* called "The Persistence of Nature in Our Lives." In Hudgins's second book nature is no less persistent, and his Lanier, who sometimes puts us in mind of Thoreau, is palpably blessed by it. And mocked and cursed as well.

The voice of Lanier knows, of course, no monotone, and it is full of the complex subtleties of mixed emotions. Still, it is more often tender than not, and never more so than in speaking of home, wife, and children. Love is a far deeper and more maturely human presence in this book than in its predecessor. It is a real, abiding sentiment between people with an unbreakable bond of affection and respect. First represented by the blood tie between Lanier and his brother Clifford, it is a kinship of soul most closely felt in the moving poem "After the Wilderness," when, following the great battle, Sid believes "Clifford was lost and I had lost him." Finding his brother "bent above a dying squirrel," he joins him in giving decent burial to all the squirrels that are fatal victims of the gun and cannon fire. The poem ends with a kind of Pietà made more touching by the unsentimental humor:

When we were done he fell across the
graves
and sobbed as though they'd been his
unborn sons.
His chest was large—it covered most
of them.
I wiped his tears and stroked his
matted hair,
and as I hugged him to my chest I
saw
he'd wet his pants. We called it
Yankee tea.

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As the narrative progresses, we continue to glimpse Clifford, but Mary Day, Lanier's wife, is his great love, and though she is rather idealized (Lanier is a proud romantic in all his loves and most of his life), she is a perfectly believable woman—look to the poem called "His Wife" and see. The romance of their love is not glamorized in any way; it's not ethereal. In "First Anniversary," Lanier and Mary make love outdoors while he watches a wasp "pump her eggs" into a caterpillar. This startling image is followed up with even more graphic detail concerning the eventual hatching of those eggs. But all these graphic details do not subvert the tenderness of the couple's lovemaking. The juxtaposition of the two sexual acts shocks us enough to open our eyes wider, to perceive more acutely, and then to understand that both are natural but only one is unmechanical and wholly right and more than only eyes can see.

The love of Lanier and Mary gives strength to the voice Hudgins presents in the later sections of the book. As he says in "He Imagines His Wife Dead," "[m]y Mary is my only love / that's not a subterfuge for death." The children they share, all boys, reinforce that love. By the time we reach the end of Lanier's life, when his voice is almost second nature to us, he is attached to us in intimate ways far outside the circumspect perimeters of most contemporary poetry. He is as large and close to us as Prospero or Emma Bovary. The emotional intensity established through his voice in the very first poems in the book does not waver or flag. For me, at least, it builds toward the next-to-last poem, "Dying."

It is, again, August, when Lanier is so close to death. He is thinking, as he lies in bed, mostly of Mary, "who loves me, who'll grieve," and of her Job-like patience in attending his withering flesh. It comes to him in that reflection that "This is the greatest gift: to know / that someone sees you as you are / and loves you anyway." And of Mary he also says,

> [She] loved me back before I knew
> the heart—a hammer, anvil, forge—
> could hold our flaws, and burn and beat them
> into something useful: from sin
> to virtue, battlefield to garden,
> and suffering to grace, somehow.

He is too ill and weak to be the aggressor in sexual love now, but both man and wife feel the need one last time for its sacred bond and human bliss. And so, with Mary's help, they do make love. It is "elegiac," of course, and in the precision with which it is described, it becomes transcendent in a way that eludes explication. A stunning, unforgettable love poem, it is the apotheosis of the book.

I have been reading Andrew Hudgins's poetry for about 15 years now, and these voices of his pursue me like urgent friends unwilling to let me go. In them and in the other voices I know to be closest to his own, I find the reverberating plea for some kind of blessing—and not just for the poet or his persona. Often in his poetry I sense that by the sheer concentrated power of its intensity, a perception—say, that cheerful and stupid bobwhite cooing near all the war dead—can be the equivalent of prayer. And sometimes he makes us realize that our plainest words to each other (talk is never highfalutin in his poems) are themselves fragments of prayer. He has poems called "Amen" and "Prayer" and "Praying Drunk," to be sure, but they're not proof in themselves of what I mean, though they are thoroughly characteristic. More to the point is a fairly recent poem, published in *Kenyon Review* and likely to appear in his next collection. It is called "Elegy for My Father, Who Is Not Dead," and in it he thinks of his father's view of the afterlife as a journey to a beautiful world beyond this vale of tears—and of his own view:

> He thinks that when I follow him
> he'll wrap me in his arms and laugh,
> the way he did when I arrived
> on earth. I do not think he's right.

He sees his father happily preparing for the boat ride to which death is the ticket. But what of him, the son, who doesn't share this kind of assurance?

> I see myself on deck
> convinced by vision or by vivid dream,
> his ship's gone down, while he's convinced
> I'll see him standing on the dock and
> waving, shouting, Welcome home.

I think there are no aliases here. And I think that the poem itself is both prayer and part of its answer.

In that little poem "Amen," towards the end of *Saints and Strangers*, Andrew Hudgins tells a quick story that "gets // everything backward."

> It understands in part if
>
> it understands at all,
> but it yearns impossible for grace
>
> even in its successes.

Now even when he jokes—and sometimes best of all when he jokes—Andrew Hudgins is a profoundly religious poet, with a hell of a lot on his mind. His voices are his faithful servants, and in his finest work, I think the poem itself is his prayer. It yearns impossibly for grace—and, being only (beautifully) poetry, finds it.

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Elise Sanguinetti of Anniston, who studied creative writing with Hudson Strode at the University of Alabama, is the author of four novels. (Photo courtesy of Ann Boozer.)

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A Conversation with Elise Sanguinetti

Ann M. Boozer

Ann M. Boozer is Chair of the English Department at The Donoho School, an independent, college preparatory school in Anniston. She has been a member of the NCTE and the ACTE for 18 years. She has served on the Board of Directors of the Alabama Shakespeare Festival and is currently on the Board of Directors of the ACTE. She is also serving on the Teacher Services Committee of the Alabama Association of Independent Schools.

Because my family and hers have been friends for many years, I can remember how exciting it was growing up and knowing Elise Sanguinetti, a "real" author. I can remember how much my mother enjoyed her books; as I did when I read them. Now we are neighbors and we attend the same church, so I have opportunities to see and know Sanguinetti as a "real" person, too.

I was pleased when Sanguinetti agreed to the interview that follows because she rarely gives interviews and doesn't much like to talk about herself. During the interview I found Mrs. Sanguinetti to be warm, witty, and interested in many subjects. Because she prefers talking about ideas and others' interests, it was often difficult to keep her on track. I often felt like the interview subject! We spent part of an afternoon together at her comfortable home, located on a quiet, tree-lined older residential street. Our conversation ranged over a broad variety of subjects. Included here are the sections that should be of particular interest to teachers.

Interviewer: What were your early years growing up in Anniston like?

Sanguinetti: I went to Woodstock [elementary] School. Then I was sent away to school in the eighth grade. It was really something to go away. . . to Ashley Hall in Charleston [South Carolina] which I wrote about in *The New Girl*. It was traumatic; I was so homesick.

Interviewer: That must have been difficult for a little Alabama girl.

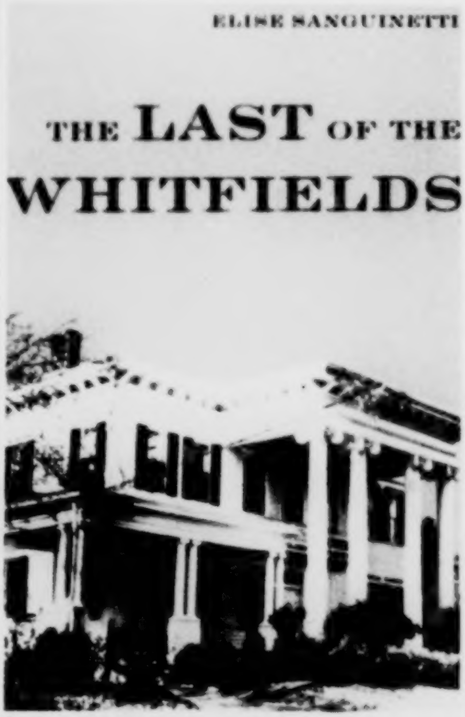
Sanguinetti: It was, it was. I couldn't read. Maybe it was the schools in Alabama, but I had to take extra reading—extra everything because I was way behind. It was the late part of the Depression, and the schools were so poor down here.

Interviewer: Were there any teachers along the way that really made an impression on you?

Sanguinetti: Every one of them! I adored every one of them. They were good teachers, they truly were. But I still had a tough time at Ashley Hall;

for the first two years, anyway. I graduated from high school there, then went to Minnesota.

Interviewer: That must have been another culture shock.



Elise Sanguinetti's *The Last of the Whitfields* (1962) introduced readers to the engaging young teenager Felicia Whitfield, who is also the narrator of Sanguinetti's second novel, *The New Girl* (1964). (This book cover is from the Library of Alabama Classics series and has been reproduced with the permission of the University of Alabama Press.)

Sanguinetti: Oh, yes! It was terrible! From Charleston, South Carolina, to Northfield, Minnesota, was like going to Norway.

Interviewer: You attended St. Olaf? Where your mother went?

Sanguinetti: Yes, and you know her father began that school, and so naturally I had to go. I didn't even want to go there at all, but I loved it. I even loved the winters! Anniston, in those days, was a lovely little small town. It was free; children could walk to school and come home, and be alone, and play without any fear at all—just no fear, not like it is now.

Interviewer: Where did you live then?

Sanguinetti: Right here. And we walked to school, then to the first year of junior high at Quintard. Then off I went. Suddenly I was on the train.

Interviewer: When did you decide to become a writer?

Sanguinetti: It was at Ashley Hall. I wrote a lot for the literary magazine, *Cerberus*, I think it was. Isn't that the keeper of Hell, or something?

We all had to write themes as we called them. We were very dramatic, absolutely dramatic. And poetry. We all had to write poetry in English classes. And I just kept on at it—all through college, and then I was with Hudson Strode at the University of Alabama. But before that, I had a wonderful English instructor named Dr. Ouida Spohn at St. Olaf, who really encouraged me to try to write.

Interviewer: Tell us something about Hudson Strode.

Sanguinetti: There's his picture, over there, and there are all his books in the library over there—a whole row. He was a fantastic teacher, especially of Shakespeare. Then he also had a class in creative writing. His students have published some 30 books, or something like that, and short stories in all the quality magazines. He was an actor, very dramatic. He said that you had to have talent, but he could teach you the technique, so that would cut off the hardship of the beginning years of writing. He said that you can't teach anyone to write, of course, but he could help with the technique. There is, you know, a technique involved in writing. Some people just come into it on their own, with the help of editors, I guess. He was a wonderful teacher and a great person, and he knew everybody in the world. We thought he was a king; he'd sit at the end of the table and talk about Sigrid Undset, and Aldous Huxley—people who would come to visit him—and we didn't know a soul. So this all sounded like something fantastic! Which, I guess, it was. He was a travel writer, as well—a wonderful writer. And he knew Isak Dinesen, stayed at her house and all that. And he would tell us about all these people, not in a name-dropping sort of way, but just what she said or he said that was enlightening. He was quite something.

Interviewer: Who was in the class that you remember?

Sanguinetti: Harper Lee and I were in school together. She wasn't in the class, but we edited the humor magazine, the *Rammer-Jammer*, together. So we knew each other, but she never took Hudson's class. I still keep up with her. She has read the manuscript of my new novel that has to be worked on. She's a unique person, and I always like to get her reaction before I send something out. Isn't it nice that she'll do it? She said to send it on up; so I did.

Interviewer: She gives you suggestions?

Sanguinetti: Yes, she does, and very good ones. It just kills me that she's not writing anymore.

Interviewer: Does your new novel have a title?

Sanguinetti: *Untitled*! I have the worst time with titles. My editors have titled all my books.

Interviewer: What was the first thing you had published?

Sanguinetti: I had some things in little quarterly magazines, and then the first thing I had published was a short story in *Mademoiselle* magazine, which was called, "To you, Frère Twig"; then my agent, Candida Donadio, a really famous New York agent, told me to put it into a novel which became *The Last of the Whitfields*, published in 1962. That was the first one. Then I did a lot of things in these literary quarterlies which nobody reads and they don't pay any money. Then I wrote for the Anniston *Star* for a long time. I used to write features.

Interviewer: Is that good preparation for becoming a fiction writer?

Sanguinetti: I think so, for a while. But I think there's a danger of writing sort of journalese if you stay at it too long.

Interviewer: How is that different?

Sanguinetti: Well, it's formula writing—like writing obituaries or covering courts—it's a style, a journalistic style. And you get into it. It took me a long time to get out of it. I wrote a novel at the University of Alabama that was never published. It was about suffering Norwegians, and it was *not* what I should have been writing. I should have been writing about Anniston, Alabama.

Interviewer: Will that novel ever be published?

Sanguinetti: Never! And I hope nobody ever sees it. It's gone anyway; I think I burned it up.

Interviewer: It does seem that many writers have to go through that, that one novel which never was or should have been published.

Sanguinetti: You do, and then you have to go through rejections—I mean thousands. You know, you could paper walls with rejection slips because it's hard to break into the whole writing field for an absolute unknown.

Interviewer: You mentioned having an agent. Is that necessary?

Sanguinetti: I got the agent after I had published in *Mademoiselle*. The magazine got me an agent.

Interviewer: So it helps to get that first thing published; then you can get an agent.

Sanguinetti: Yes. And it's just terribly hard because the magazines are doing less and less [fiction], so there's not a market [for short stories] out there. There's *Harper's*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Mademoiselle*, *The New Yorker*, and *Esquire*. And so many people who want to write.

Interviewer: It must be very frustrating.

Sanguinetti: It is; it's awful. And then, too, quality fiction is going—for the novel, and this is upsetting me terribly. Big corporations are taking over the publishing houses, and the bottom line is the dollar, and if that editor doesn't make that bottom line, he's fired. So they [publishers] have to have blockbusters.

Interviewer: What writers do you like to read?

Sanguinetti: I've just finished reading a book by V. S. Naipaul. I just loved it, especially his observations about Charleston and Mississippi. Then I like John Updike's short stories; I don't like his novels. I like John Cheever a great deal, and he also is a short story writer rather than a novelist. I like Sigrid Undset, who wrote *Kristin Lavransdatter*. You have got to read it; I think it's the greatest novel written in the world. And I like Isak Dinesen, a marvelous writer. I like Southern writers. I like Flannery O'Connor enormously. Not so, Eudora Welty. Isn't that strange? But I think Flannery O'Connor was a genius. I love her stories and read them over and over. She has that great sense of humor which is just unique.

Interviewer: So much of *Whitfields* is uproariously funny. Where do you think your sense of humor comes from?

Sanguinetti: I don't know whether I can write humorously or not. My parents were both very funny and very serious. They had good senses of humor; my brother does, too, I think. It just comes from the genes, I guess.

Interviewer: What do you do when you write?

Sanguinetti: It's just like going to a job. At least that is the way I try to do it. I go out there [to a small room in a former servants' house behind the main house] where there is no phone or anybody and just sit there all morning hoping for a good page or two pages a day. It's all sort of luck. I'm a slow writer. I try to stop where I can start again tomorrow—start so that I won't sit there for an hour.

Interviewer: Do you write in longhand?

Sanguinetti: No, I write both in longhand and on the typewriter. I haven't gotten to the computer thing yet. Those little things at the top [of the screen] bother me. I'm still writing on my college typewriter. Nobody will believe it; I can hardly get it fixed. It's like a friend.

Interviewer: Which of your books do you like the best?

Sanguinetti: This shocks everybody because I like *McBee's Station* better than I like the rest of them. I think it's a better book, and a funnier book. Most people don't think it's funny, but I do. I think it's hilarious—and that it has more depth and is a little on the moving side. It also catches this part of the country more than the other books.

Interviewer: You pronounced the title "Mac'Bee."

Sanguinetti: Yes, the stress should be on the first syllable. The headmistress at Ashley Hall was named that, and I really disliked her, so I thought I would immortalize her in this way. She was so strict; it was just terrible. I didn't really hate her, but she had some Nazi tendencies, and that's where I got the name.

Interviewer: What about *The Dowager*?

Sanguinetti: Oh, the "do-wagger," as people around here say it? That's set in Charleston and also Norway. I think I made a mistake in that book because I should have kept it in Charleston instead of going to Norway with it. That's my mother's background so I thought I might bring that in, but I don't know whether I brought that off or not. It did have good reviews.

Interviewer: Where is it in the sequence of your books?

Sanguinetti: It's the third. Of four. It's hard doing novels; it takes a lot out of you, so I thought, well, why not just do some short stories, which I've been doing. And the novel that I've just finished.

Interviewer: Have any of your recent short stories been published?

Sanguinetti. Yes, in very obscure quarterlies--really obscure, this time. But it keeps my hand in, keeps me writing.

Interviewer: Any plans for a collection of your short stories?

Sanguinetti: I may sometime in the future, but you have to have at least nine good ones to do that. I'd like to very much.

Interviewer: How do you inspire a student to read with the competition of television? That's something teachers have to battle constantly.

Sanguinetti: You see, we didn't have television when I was growing up and I think students need to have a strong background in the classics: Russian and English writers. I would say French, but I don't like French writers.

Interviewer: Why?

Sanguinetti: French literature is just mushy to me. I can't read Proust. He took 11 pages to take his temperature, which is just ridiculous.

Interviewer: Our students are often lacking in knowledge of international writers—Borges, for instance.

Sanguinetti: The South American writers coming along now are great.

Interviewer: For instance, so many black writers and women writers have been neglected.

Sanguinetti: I know. Pearl Buck was the only one I remember. And Eudora Welty. I don't know why I don't like her work. What is it? I loved *The Optimist's Daughter*, though.

Interviewer: Is it that you've got to care about the characters?

Sanguinetti: You've got to care; I care about Flannery O'Connor's characters, as strange and bizarre as they often are.

Interviewer: Are there any local writers you admire?

Sanguinetti: Edith Alston is a fine writer, especially her children's books. And Tom Turner, who wrote *Buttermilk Road*. He has written some fine short stories.

Interviewer: What question about your books do you least like to be asked?

Sanguinetti: The one I'm always asked, especially about *Whitfields*, is if it's autobiographical. You know, all writing has to be autobiographical at some point, but *Whitfields* isn't. My mother was Norwegian, certainly not from Charleston; my father was not a banker. You can't avoid putting yourself into your work because, after all, it is life as you see it. But people don't even think that *Whitfields* is a novel. They ask about this or that in the book that my brother did, thinking it's all true.

Interviewer: Does that make you uncomfortable?

Sanguinetti: Uncomfortable and a little uneasy because they don't really think it's a novel; they think every bit of it is the truth. All of those things that my brother supposedly had done, he never did. If anybody did them, I probably did—you know, the crazy things. The characters are combinations of many people, and then some of it just completely made up, most of it. The situation was true, but that was about all. I certainly never knew anybody who had a baby in the john at Ashley Hall, but we all know of people who have or have heard of someone having a similar experience. You simply draw on your imagination of what could have been.

Interviewer: Is there anything you would like to tell students or teachers of students of writing?

Sanguinetti: Just write, write all the time. And read. But mainly just write—every day, every single day. Just keep at it and don't get discouraged because you will be. You have to pick yourself up and keep on. It takes lots of perseverance and a lot of patience, especially in the beginning. You send these things out and you think they're just wonderful, and they come back with these little printed things: sorry. And you brood about it for a week.

Interviewer: They must be like your children.

Sanguinetti: Yes, they are. But you have to keep sending them out.

Interviewer: Do you have to have a thick skin?

Sanguinetti: Yes, and I don't, so it's awful—personal, like they don't like you at all.

Interviewer: Like getting your composition for English class back with red marks all over it.

Sanguinetti: It is; it is—like a D-. It's a terrible thing, but you can't let that bother you, you just can't.

Vicki Covington's Vision of the New South

Charles Avinger

Charles Avinger received his Master's degree in English Education from the University of Alabama in 1988. He has worked for the State Department of Education and is currently a faculty member in the Department of English at Troy State University in Troy, Alabama, where he coordinates workshops for secondary English teachers.

While it is relatively easy to establish the place of writers from the past in American literature, it is often difficult to predict how a current writer's work will eventually be viewed. Contemporary Southern writers, moreover, are judged in comparison not only with past and present American writers but also inevitably

Vicki Covington of Birmingham has published short stories in leading national magazines such as *The New Yorker* and is the author of the novel *Gathering Home* (Simon and Schuster). (Photo courtesy of Read Alabama!)

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with such major Southern predecessors as Robert Penn Warren, Richard Wright, Carson McCullers, Flannery O'Connor, and preeminently, of course, William Faulkner. Although the difficulty of contemporary evaluation and this special critical burden of the past rest upon Vicki Covington as upon all Southern writers of today, they rest perhaps a little less heavily because of her clear and immediately powerful pictures of the past and present in Southern life itself.

A Birmingham resident, Covington has published a number of short stories and a novel, *Gathering Home*, which provide incisive views into the late twentieth-century South. In no other region of the country is there still such widespread operative consciousness of history. By emphasizing the links between past and present, Covington creates the vision of a New South that, like its individual citizens, is in a state of change, concerned with both its heritage and its destiny.

Past and the present are the central focus in "Magnolia," Covington's story of age, change, and adjustment to the difficulties of life. The narrator and her friends are women in their eighties who have survived difficult times and who now help each other with the daily tasks of living. On a shopping excursion, the women reminisce about the past—from high school graduation in 1923 through the deaths of their husbands—and examine the present status of their lives. Everyone in the story undergoes changes, even the narrator's son, a former preacher now teaching at a Florida college. The narrator has survived marriage to an alcoholic and his untimely death to become a needed source of strength for her friends. Appropriately, the Southern woman's inner strength that develops from a hard life is symbolized by the magnolia:

> In order to make the magnolia a shade tree, you have to cut the lowest branches when it's young. . . . Magnolia leaves are not delicate. They only grow strong and handsome. Scotty and I helped Lila and Hal Ray plant this tree. It didn't bloom for many years. (34)

The character who most vividly represents the tension between the past and the present is Lila. Elderly and frail, she desires independence but is forced to live in a nursing home. Lila's frustration is evident when the narrator finds her trying on a used dress donated by the ladies' auxiliary:

> She was wearing a light-green evening dress. Lila's got balls of fat in places. The dress made her look like a bunch of big grapes. . . . Why don't they sort through them, I wondered. Sending an evening gown to an old lady isn't funny. (32)

Lila's attempt to recapture her past is an embarrassing failure. Even more disillusioning is her visit to her old house. When Lila tries to get in her car and drive, her friend prevents her from doing so: "No, Lila. Ben said no car" (32). Her friend speaks to her as though she were a child, and her paternalistic attitude, while necessary for Lila's safety, merely confirms how dependent and incapacitated Lila has become.

"Duty" is Covington's story, more broadly, of a changing South and its changing people. The story centers on Jack, a young lawyer who returns to his old neighborhood to help his aunt attend to funeral arrangements for his uncle. The journey provides disappointing insights for Jack. He realizes that his old neighborhood, which represents his past, has changed substantially. The neighborhood where Jack "once sat during spring showers, listening to raindrops hit against the roof" of his porch has been sullied by such grim realities as crib death, kidnapping, purse snatching, and burglary (22). His idyllic Old South exists only in fond memories, while the present New South presents problems that cannot be ignored.

Like his old neighborhood, Jack has undergone inevitable changes. His carefree childhood days have been replaced by adulthood and its myriad responsibilities. Two contrasting images symbolize youthful *joie de vivre* and adult responsibility. The innocence of childhood is symbolized by Jack's infant daughter Peyton, as she playfully explores the cemetery where family members are buried. The world of adult responsibility is represented by Jack's wife Marian, a surgeon's assistant, whose job requires technical perfection. These contrasting characters symbolize the past and the present in the South. The story suggests that the South, like Jack, has "grown up" and left its days of innocence behind, a maturing process that Covington seems to view with wistful disappointment.

"Affairs" is the story of a young Alabama woman's concern over her inability to conceive a child and her unsatisfying relationship with her husband. Her depression and frustration lead her to consult a fertility specialist who "has been treating the women on [her] father's side for 30 years" (39) and a psychiatrist who similarly attends to the family's emotional problems. They also lead her to become sexually involved with a young farmer from north Alabama.

Like "Magnolia" and "Duty," "Affairs" portrays a character concerned with age and with her future. When Trish asks Brett how old he is, she notes that, since turning 30, she has begun to ask all the people she meets about their age. Though she is far younger than Lila in "Magnolia," she too feels that she is missing out on life. "Affairs" also reflects Southern concerns with tradition and change. Trish goes to the doctors who have treated her relatives for years because "in the South, we have family doctors" (39). Brett's relatives explored their family history, stopping the investigation "when it looked like all we come from was a band of robbers in Georgia" (70). Even today such things matter in the South. The changes in the South are represented by the modern medical technology employed against Trish's infertility. "You know, your aunts missed out on all these diagnostic tools," the doctor tells Trish (40). The fact that the painful procedures never actually help Trish, and the fact that she ultimately seeks solace in a rural farmhouse "with a tin roof and a porch swing" (70) indicate that, for this character at least, the New South is not necessarily an improvement over the Old. Trish's disillusionment with the contemporary South and her place in it parallels Lila's sense of helplessness and Jack's loss of childhood wonder.

Gathering Home is Covington's most fully developed treatment of the New South. The novel centers on the congressional campaign of liberal minister Cal Gaines and his adopted daughter Whitney's discovery of her biological father and grandmother. The changing economic and political climate of the South is reflected in Covington's choice of setting, the Five Points area of Birmingham, where the past and the present so strikingly converge. The area consists of "old bars, a dilapidated cafe, new neon party shops; in general, most structures were either in a state of disrepair or newly repaired" (72). Whitney and Cal acknowledge this mixture of the old and the new:

> The architectural design was Spanish and quaint. But, in the shops nearby, they were placing purple neons in the windows and attaching new-wave awnings above the entrances. Whitney believed this to be a confused

> neighborhood. She could hear Cal's response to this allegation: "We are meeting the needs of the old and the young." (27)

Many of the characters are progressive people in traditional occupations. Cal is a minister in a very traditional Southern denomination. (He is obviously a Southern Baptist, though the denomination is carefully left unspecified in the book.) However, he uses his ministerial position to support a controversial cause, to give shelter to refugees from El Salvador. Similarly, steelworker Nat lives in surroundings that tastefully belie his occupation. He goes out for beers with his friends, but does not have them visit his apartment because he does not "want to hear the banter about the antiques, the quilts, and the china" (107). Covington further contrasts the Old South and the New South by setting half of the novel in contemporary Birmingham and half in Pineapple, Alabama, the epitome of Southern tradition.

The mixture of tradition and change that characterizes the New South is also seen in the morals and values of the characters. Homosexuality, traditionally a taboo in the South, is calmly accepted by most of the novel's characters. Instead of the intolerance and rejection he fears, Sam finds unconditional acceptance by Whitney and Cal. Eva accepts her son's choice of a mate, referring to herself as Aaron's mother-in-law. Her acceptance, however, is typical of the Southern tradition by which things may be accepted as long as they are not explicitly acknowledged: "She and Sam hadn't actually acknowledged things, but she had known ten years ago when Sam first brought Aaron home to meet her" (51). It is the South's changing moral perspective, in fact, that makes Sam feel that he can come home again.

Other characters represent traditional or contemporary values. Although Cal is liberal and progressive, Covington provides examples of conservative thought to balance the picture. At one point Whitney and Francy overhear a steelworker calling Cal "[a] pinko all dressed up in a preacher's robe" and saying that "Cal Gaines is going to hell" (114-15). Further evidence of the continuing strength of traditional values in the South is the victory of conservative Naylor over Cal in the election. Thus Covington's South explores contemporary values but often stubbornly clings to the attitudes of the past.

In fact inseparable everywhere, the past and present are felt to be especially inseparable in the South. Through the use of carefully considered imagery and symbolism, Vicki Covington explores the state of a past-haunted region as it verges on a new century. Desire to return to an idyllic past, fear of confronting an uncertain future, and appreciation of tradition coupled with interest in progress characterize the almost-twenty first-century South and the Southerners about whom Covington writes. As the South moves forward, perhaps eventually abandoning its ties to the past, Vicki Covington's fiction will preserve a vivid picture of the South in a critical period of change, a portrait of a region caught between the values and demands of two worlds.

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Excerpts from "The Impulse to Fiction"

Madison Jones

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Madison Jones retired as Auburn University's Writer-in-Residence in 1987, after a long and distinguished teaching career beginning in 1956. Described by Allen Tate as a "Southern Thomas Hardy," Jones has published eight novels, 10 short stories, and over two dozen essays and reviews. His most recent novel, Last Things, *appeared only a few months ago. The many honors he has received include a* Sewanee Review *fellowship, a Guggenheim Foundation fellowship, and a Rockefeller Foundation fellowship. Jones was chosen as Distinguished Graduate Faculty Lecturer at Auburn in 1979 and inducted into the Alabama Academy of Distinguished Authors in 1982.*

The following excerpts are from "The Impulse to Fiction," which Jones presented as a University Lecture when he was named Auburn University's Distinguished Graduate Professor. For the complete lecture, see Southern Humanities Review, *14 (Summer 1980): 211-20.*

. . .

A novelist's purpose has little to do with the publication and clarification of real-life facts as such, however interesting or socially useful the facts might be. At bottom, even if unconsciously, his purpose is to explore and test and illuminate his own vision. He is seeking to understand himself, but also necessarily, the world to which he is mortally bound. Everybody experiences—it often seems by merest accident—moments of illumination, moments when a door opens. But art is something designed to produce such illuminations—to produce them, first of all, for the artist himself. At some time, or times, in the composing of his work he suddenly *sees;* and this seeing is the goal toward which the most fundamental impulse behind his work has been driving him. He may hope, even desperately, for subsequent rewards of a different kind, but this seeing is his real and most honorable reward.

. . .

A novelist, an artist, has to make his own world—but this statement needs emphatic qualifications. His world cannot be merely the stuff of his dreams and wishes, a false malleable world fitted to the accommodation of his vision. This is what we get in tendentious or propagandistic art. And this is what we mean when we question an artist's integrity, when we see that he has distorted his facts. The artist's true world is his own, all right, but it does not violate nature, and its facts are exactly as stubborn and angular as those in the world of his daily experience. He shapes and shuffles them, but always with his eyes kept fixed on the limits that prevail in the real world. If he fails to do this, he fails to discover anything about reality not already known to him. It is precisely the world's angularity that, requiring to be honored, modifies and expands his original vision.

. . . .

. . . The world can speak to us, but not with its own natural tongue. It has nothing to say to the silent observer, nothing to give back to the man who brings nothing to it. But it can participate in a conversation, a kind of dialogue with us, replying to our conceptions. This is our own doing, however. Our own conceptions, our visions, are what bring the world into the human order and give it a tongue with which to answer back. This is what art does: by its vision, it invests the world with a comprehensible life.

Madison Jones, Auburn University Writer-in-Residence Emeritus, has been called "a Southern Thomas Hardy." *Last Things*, his eighth book of fiction was published fall 1989. (Photo by Ray La Fountaine. Courtesy of Read Alabama!)

Words, Words, Words!

Eugene Walter

Eugene Walter was born in Mobile, wrote poetry and tales from childhood, served as Air Force cryptographer in World War II, lived long in Paris and Rome, with sorties into Greece, England, the Sahara, Spain, and other places. Although his chief activities are as author of poetry, novels, short stories (which have won him many prizes, including Lippincott, Sewanee Rockefeller, Eugene F. Saxton, O. Henry, and Prix Guilloux*), he has been active as artist, illustrator, stage designer, marionetteer, journalist, actor, gardener, cat lover, and editor. He gets up early and works at translation every day: De La Motte Fouqué's* Undine*, plays of Molière and Giraudoux, poetry of Aloysius Bertrand, Paul Fort, film scripts of Fellini, Zefferelli. A new novel,* Adam's Housecat*, will appear shortly.*

Eugene Walter has returned to live in his native Mobile after three decades of residence abroad in Paris and Rome. His works include *Monkey Poems* and *The Untidy Pilgrim* as well as two cookbooks, *American Cooking Southern Style* and *Delectable Dishes from Termite Hall*. (Photo by John W. Ray. Courtesy of Eugene Walter.)

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I spend a great deal of time thinking about languages. There's never a day that I don't go on safari into the complete multi-volume *Oxford English Dictionary* or have a go at my three editions of Webster which I keep lined up: the original one of 1842, the delightfully illustrated edition of 1905, and the 1980 edition. They are part of a wall of books including ones on English and American slang and Australian argot, *Larousse* and *Litrè*, the Fowlers and Logan Pearsall Smith, Hogben, and many many more. I'm "into" languages.

There's a movement afoot pushing Congress to make English the official language of the United States. A far more complex proposal than the recent flag-burning brouhaha. I am always fearful when confronted with our semi-literate and overbearing bureaucracy, and I tremble to think of what might happen if those bodies take over our language.

The French Academy was created in 1635 and began at once to clean up the French language and declare which words were acceptable and which not. At that time the vocabularies of French and English were about 60 percent the same, with different pronunciations. The Academy took a prissy-proper view of speech and decided to eliminate many delightful, slangy, and onomatopoeic words. That's why an English-speaking person with second-year French can make out certain words in the great Rabelais which require footnotes for French readers. But the Academy and, indeed, many French scholars and pedants have always had a rather snobby view of the French language. (Perhaps part of that is a nagging memory of the fact that French is based on Roman soldiers' slang and Medieval copyists' errors.)

The Academy has so far published only the first three volumes of the official dictionary of the French language. The members of the Academy have spent so much time debating that life has passed them by. In the last two decades purists have fumed and fussed over words of supposed English origin which have found themselves in valuable common usage in French. *Le weekend* is certainly more economical and breezy than *la fin de la semaine*, and *le smoking* (tuxedo) more useful than *costume correcte du soir*. What will the Academicians do with *flirt*? The old French verb *fleurter* is used to describe the butterfly's action of going from flower to flower. It crossed the channel and became (figuratively) the English verb *to flirt*, then went back into France as *flirter*. A useful word? You bet!

Some readers may think I'm anti-French. *Au contraire*! The refinements of the French language, the subtleties, the eternal search for definition of the rarest and mistiest sentiments make moments of delighted shock for an English reader delving into French literature. French is a relatively constricted language (*Litrè*, a grand and noble work on the language, is only four volumes compared to the 15 of our *Oxford English Dictionary*), but consider how the French approach things. When we pull daisy petals, we say "Loves me, loves me not." What do the French say? *"Elle m'aime un peu, assez, beaucoup, à la folie, pas de tout."* ("She loves me a little, enough, a lot, to the point of madness, not at all.")

Still, what a wondrous language our English! We welcome everything. Our boating terms come often from Dutch (*yacht, yare, skiff*). Persian contributes *zephyr, paradise, vermillion, azure, julep*. We welcome bits from Old Norse, from every European language, even some bits from exotic vocabularies like Basque and Ainu (our slang *gob* for sailor comes from *gobbima* which mysteriously occurs in both those languages!)

I shudder to think what might happen if the bureaucrats make English an "official" language. But, of course, it can't be, it never will be, no way! As you read this, 200 new words, from jazzy slang to polysyllabic scientific terms, are being coined somewhere on planet earth—in English! Because of its grand come-one-come-all aspects, English is still young, developing, frisky, slightly wild, not to be controlled by officialdom or an academy.

How about multiple "official" languages? If I were Secretary of Education for the United States, I'd fight, bleed, and die to have French taught to all students from the third grade on, and for the simple reason that when someone of the vast, sprawling, half-wild, improvisational English language learns French, he or she begins to perceive and comprehend the *theory* and *structure* of language. Ben Franklin learned French and, caught up in just such a consciousness of language, went on to learn Latin and Greek. Ben was right. The extraordinary richness of English comes partly from the classic Greek and Latin words which have come directly to us, partly from the hordes of words which have come to us from those classical languages by way of Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese.

I think of the genius or spirit of the English language in the image of a dolphin playing in the surf. Ours is the only language so widely rich and various and so playful. If English becomes "official," the bureaucrats will surely suppress nonsense rhymes and purely playful bantering skipping bouncing things like *hey nonino, liliburlero-bullen-a-la, fiddle-de-dee, dillypot, flatfoot-floogie-with-a-floy-joy, boop-boop-a-doop*. To know English properly, one must know all those capers as well as the flat Anglo-Saxon bluntness of Mother Goose rhymes (not one word of Latin origin in any of them) and, besides, the rolling sonorities of legal and medical texts and the King James version.

Such incredible complexity and flexibility! How many ways to say everything! In *Macbeth* Shakespeare says "the multitudinous seas incarnadine," which one could paraphrase as "turn the busy sea red" or "change the restless tides into a sea of blood" or, as Ogden Nash might say, "render ruddy the vast wet muddy" or "rosy-up the big dip." Other possibilities: "turn all red the big wild wet" or "change to crimson the ceaseless waters" or "metamorphose to carmine the reckless waves."

If English becomes "official," will the sportive ones who push the frontiers of language against the murk be banned? Being made Secretary of Education, I'd make the writings of Edward Lear, Lewis Carroll, Thomas Hood, George Herriman, Don Marquis, Ogden Nash, and Dame Edith Sitwell's *Façade* required reading. If language is to be legislated, I'd push for requiring all students to learn two languages from second grade. Given our patriotic excesses, perhaps Congress will create two national languages: Official English and Unofficial English. I don't have to tell you which one I'd speak, write, and teach! Yep, with a boop-boop-a-doop, liliburlero-bullen-a-la, and a floy-joy.

Perhaps no Alabama storyteller is better known regionally than Kathryn Tucker Windham of Selma. Her appearances on National Public Radio have also introduced her to a wide national audience. (Photo courtesy of Read Alabama!)

In *With a Southern Accent* (1948) and *A Place of Springs* (1979), Camden's Viola Goode Liddell gives a personal picture of Black Belt life that the *Saturday Review* found of "undeniable historical and social importance and interest." (Photo courtesy of Read Alabama!)

A Tentative Checklist of Alabama Writers of Children's Literature

Gene Geiger

G. E. Geiger is Special Collections Librarian at Auburn University, where he gathers and displays books and manuscripts of all kinds written by Alabamians. Employed by Auburn for more than 25 years, he has held his current position since 1979. Geiger became interested in Alabama writers when he acted as a judge on a statewide committee to select Outstanding Author of the Year in 1983.

Today the market for children's literature is so great that new bookstores are being established to meet the demands of the young reader, and many bookstores have large collections of juvenile literature. This list shows the contributions of Alabama writers to children's literature in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Children's Literature Written in the Nineteenth Century

In *A Literary History of Alabama*, Benjamin Williams says that Alabama produced no great novelist equal to South Carolina's William Gilmore Simms and no poet of the stature of Virginia's Edgar Allen Poe or Georgia's Sidney Lanier. In fact, he suggests that the early years of the settlement of Alabama produced no writers of great consequence. This same lack of significant writers also occurs in children's literature. To further complicate the search for writers of children's stories, their works originally appeared in serial publications and often the same writer also wrote adult fiction.

Many of the publications listed here appeared in *Burke's Weekly*, *The Constitution*, *The Picayne*, or other newspapers or periodicals. Most were either dialect tales or moralistic stories.

Bellamy, Elizabeth W.

—. *Little Joanna*. New York: Appleton, 1876.

—. *Old Man Gilbert*. Chicago: S. J. Clarke, 1888.

—. *Penny Lancaster, Farmer*. New York: Lovell, 1889.

Brown, Annie Finley

—. *Fireside Battles*. Chicago: Laird & Lee, 1900.

Clark, Kate Upson

—. *Art and Citizenship*. New York: Eaton & Mims, Jennings & Graham, 1907.

---. *Bringing up Boys: A Study*. New York: Crowell, 1899.

---. *The Dole Twins: or Child Life in New England in 1807*. Boston: Page, 1906.

---. *How Dexter Paid His Way*. New York: Crowell, 1901.

---. *"That MaryAnn": The Story of a Country Summer*. Boston: D. Lothrop, 1893.

---. *Up the Witch Brook: A Summer Idyl*. New York: Taylor, 1902.

---. *White Butterflies: And Other Stories*. New York: Taylor, 1900.

---. *Move Upward*. New York: Crowell, 1902.

---. *Teaching the Child Patriotism*. Boston: Page, 1918.

---. *Bringing Up Boys*. New York: Crowell, 1899.

---. *Donald's Good Hen: The Nearly True Story of a Real Hen*. Salem, MA: Cassino and Son, 1905.

---. *White Butterflies*. New York: Taylor & Company, 1900.

Cocke, Zitella

---. *Cherokee Rose and Other Southern Poems*. Boston: Gorham, 1907.

---. *A Doris Reed*. Boston: Copeland and Day, 1895.

---. *"That Grasshopper's Hop" and Other Verses*. Boston: Dora Estes, 1901.

Cruse, Mary Anne

---. *Auntie's Christmas-trees: The Child's Gift Book for the Christmas Holidays*. New York: General Protestant Episcopal Sunday School Union and Church Book Society, 1875.

---. *Bessie Melville*. New York: General Protestant Episcopal Sunday School Union and Church Book Society, 1867.

---. *The Little Episcopalian or The Child Taught by the Prayer Book*. New York: General Protestant Episcopal Sunday School Union and Church Book Society, 1855.

---. *Little Grandpa*. New York: T. Whitaker, 1888.

---. *The Tiny Lawn Tennis Club*. New York: Dutton, 1880.

Crute, Sallie Spotswood

---. *Bud's From Memory's Wreath*. Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen & Haffelfinger, 1873.

Davis, Mary E.

---. *Glenorie and Other Poems*. Montpelier, VT: Argus and Patriot Steem Book and Job Printing Works, 1877.

Davis, Mary Elizabeth Moragne

---. *Lays From the Sunny Lands*. Buffalo: Moulton, Wenborne & Company, 1888.

Davis, Mary Evelyn (Moore)

---. *A Christmas Masque of Saint Roch, P'ere Dagobert and Throwing the Wanga*. Chicago: McClurg, 1896.

---. *Minding the Gap, and Other Poems*. Houston: Cushing & Case, 1867.

---. *In War Times at La Rose Blanche*. Boston: D. Lothrop Company, 1888.

---. *Poems*. Houston: E.H. Cushings, 1872.

---. *Under the Man-Fig*. Boston: Houghton, 1895.

---. *An Elephant's Track, and Other Stories*. New York: Harper, 1897.

---. *The Price of Silence*. Boston: Houghton, 1907.

---. *The Queen's Garden*. Boston: Houghton, 1900.

---. *The Ships of Desire*. Tokyo: Hokuseido, 1955.

---. *Tulane Songs*. New Orleans: Tulane UP, 1901.

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---. *Under Six Flags: The Story of Texas.* Boston: Ginn, 1897.

---. *A Bunch of Roses.* Boston: Small Maynard, 1903.

---. *The Little Chervalier.* Boston: Houghton, 1903.

---. *Jaconetta and Her Loves.* Boston: Houghton, 1901.

---. *The Moons of Balbonca.* Boston: Houghton, 1908.

Greene, Frances Nimmo

---. *Legends of King Arthur and His Court.* (Illustrated with original drawings by Edmund H. Garrett). Boston: Ginn, 1901.

Hole, Catherine V.

---. *Ellen Elliot or, A Happy Home in Alabama.* New York: Burgess, Stringer, 1845.

Macon, John Alfred

---. *Uncle Gabe Tucker or Reflection, Song, and Sentiment in the Quarters.* Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1883.

McEacheon, R. B.

---. *Youthful Days and Other Poems.* Marshall, TX: Jenning Bros., 1878.

McKinney, Kate Slaughter

---. *Katydid Poems, with a Letter by James Aug. Williams.* Louisville: n.p. (printed by the Currier-Journal Job Printing Company), 1887.

---. *Palace of Silver.* New York: H. Vinal, 1927.

---. *The Weed By the Wall.* Boston: Richard G. Badger, 1911.

---. *The Silent Witness: A Tale of a Kentucky Tragedy.* New York: Neale, 1906.

Messeger, Lillian Rozell

---. *Fragments from an Old Inn.* New York: Putnam's, 1885.

---. *The Heroine of the Hudson (and other poems).* Richmond: Hermitage, 1906.

---. *Martha Sawyer Gielow: An Appreciation.* N.p.:n.p(Privately printed), 1914.

---. *The Southern Cross and Other Poems.* Buffalo: Charles Wells Moulton, 1891.

---. *Threads of Fate.* Published by the author, 1873.

---. *The Vision of Gold and Other Poems.* New York: Putnam's, 1886.

---. *In the Heart of America.* Richmond: J.L. Hill, 1896.

Moore, Idora McClellum

---. *Betsy Hamilton: Southern Character Sketches.* Atlanta: Dichert, 1921.

---. *Christmas on the Old Times Plantation.* Talladega: Highland City Book Club, 1900.

Peck, Sarah Elizabeth

---. *True Education Reader Series.* Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publication Association, 1907.

Pope, Mary E. Foote

---. *Poems.* Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1872.

Towles, Catharine Webb Barber

---. *Stories for the American Freemason's Fireside.* Cincinnati: American Masonic, 1868.

Children's Literature Written in the Twentieth Century

Unlike the nineteenth century, the twentieth century has produced a number of writers of children's literature in Alabama. In this century, children's literature has become an identifiable art form. Children's books are now usually illustrated to enhance enjoyment. Some even "pop up." Also books are written for certain age groups or for certain grade levels.

The subject matter of these books is varied, from the nonsensical to the serious, from happiness to sadness, from doing to don't. Animals often are important characters—dogs, cats, birds, monkeys. Biographies are written for certain age levels. "How to" books are popular. Children's books currently deal with the many subjects or problems the young must cope with. The twentieth century produced such writers as Dorothy Baughman, W. E. Butterworth, Emma Butterworth, Emma Gelders Sterne, Garrard Harris, Annie V. Weaver, Martha Young, Maud Lindsey, and a host of others.

Barton, Betty F.

---. *Jeannie.* Birmingham: Banner 1985.

Biddle, Sara Jean

---. *Lost and Found.* Great Neck, NY: Todd and Honeywell, 1984.

Black, Elizabeth Griswold

---. *Twelve Button Shoes.* Montgomery: Black, 1979.

Blassingame, Wyatt

---. *Baden-Powell, Chief Scout of the World.* Champaign, IL: Garrard, 1966.

---. *Bent's Fort, Crossroads of the Great West.* Champaign, IL: Garrard, 1967.

---. *Bowley Bill: Seagoing Cowboy.* Champaign, IL: Garrard, 1976.

---. *Combat Nurses of World War II.* New York: Random, 1967.

---. *Dan Beard, Scoutmaster of America.* Champaign, IL: Garrard, 1972.

---. *Devils in the Dark.* Chicago: Weinberg, 1979.

---. *Diving for Treasure.* Philadelphia: Macrae-Smith, 1971.

---. *Eleanor Roosevelt.* New York: Putnam's, 1968.

---. *Ernest Thompson Seton, Scout and Naturalist.* Champaign, IL: Garrard, 1971.

---. *The Everglades, From Yesterday to Tomorrow.* New York: Putnam's, 1974.

---. *The First Book of American Expansion.* New York: F. Watts, 1965.

---. *The First Book of Florida.* New York: F. Watts, 1963.

---. *The First Book of the Seashore.* New York: F. Watts, 1964.

---. *For Better, For Worse.* New York: Crowell, 1951.

---. *Franklin D. Roosevelt, Four Times President.* Champaign, IL: Garrard, 1966.

---. *The French Foreign Legion.* New York: Random, 1955.

---. *Frontier Doctors.* New York: F. Watts, 1963.

---. *The Frontier Doctors.* New York: Scholastic, 1966.

---. *The Gentle Hand Behind 'Hagar the Horrible.'* Detroit: Ford Motor Company, 1983.

---. *The Golden Geyser.* New York: Doubleday, 1961.

---. *Great Trains of the World.* New York: Random, 1953.

---. *Halo of Spears.* New York: Doubleday, 1962.

---. *His Kingdom for a Horse.* New York: F. Watts, 1957.

---. *How Davy Crockett Got a Bearskin Coat.* Champaign, IL: Garrard, 1972.

---. *The Incas and the Spanish Conquest.* New York: J. Messner, 1980.

---. *Jake Gaither: Winning Coach.* Champaign, IL: Garrard, 1969.

---. *Jim Beckwourth: Black Trapper and Indian Chief.* Champaign, IL: Garrard, 1973.

---. *John Henry and Paul Bunyan Play Baseball.* Champaign, IL: Garrard, 1971.

---. *John Smith Hears Death Walking.* New York: Bartholomew, 1944.

---. *Joseph Stalin and Communist Russia.* Champaign, IL: Garrard, 1971.

---. *He Legeon Ton Xenon.* Dallas: Atlantis, 1958.

---. *The Little Killers, Fleas, Lice, Mosquitoes.* New York: Putnam's, 1975.

---. *Live From the Devil.* New York: Doubleday, 1959.

---. *The Look-It-Up Book of Presidents.* New York: Random, 1968.

---. *The Look-It-Up Book of Presidents.* New York: Random, 1990.

---. *Medical Corps Heroes of World War II.* New York: Random, 1969.

---. *Men Who Opened the West.* New York: Putnam's, 1966.

---. *The Mountain Men.* New York: F. Watts, 1962.

---. *Naturalist-Explorers.* New York: F. Watts, 1964.

---. *The Navy's Fliers in World War II.* Louisville: Westminister, 1967.

---. *Osceola: Seminole War Chief.* Champaign, IL: Garrard, 1967.

---. *Out-Island Doctor, London.* Champaign, IL: Hodder and Stoughton, 1963.

---. *Paul Bunyan Fights the Monster Plants.* Champaign, IL: Garrard, 1974.

---. *Pecos Bill and the Wonderful Clothesline Snake.* Champaign, IL: Garrard, 1978.

---. *Pecos Bill Catches a Hidebehind.* Champaign, IL: Garrard, 1977.

---. *Pecos Bill Rides a Tornado.* Champaign, IL: Garrard, 1973.

---. *Porcupines.* New York: Dodd, 1982.

---. *Sacagawea, Indian Guide.* Champaign, IL: Garrard, 1965.

---. *Science Catches the Criminal.* New York: Dodd, 1975.

---. *Seminoles of Florida.* Tallahassee: Department of Agriculture, 1959.

---. *Skunks.* New York: Dodd, 1981.

---. *Stephen Decatur: Fighting Sailor.* Champaign, IL: Garrard, 1964.

---. *Story of Boy Scouts.* Champaign, IL: Garrard, 1968.

---. *The Story of the United States Flag.* Champaign, IL: Garrard, 1969.

---. *The Strange Armadillo.* New York: Dodd, 1983.

---. *They Rode the Frontier.* New York: F. Watts, 1959.

---. *This Land is Mine.* New York: Popular Library, 1959.

---. *Thor Heyerdahl, Viking Scientist.* New York: Elsevier/Nelson, 1979.

---. *The U. S. Frogmen of World War II.* New York: Random, 1964.

---. *Weekly Reader Books Presents Thor Heyerdahl, Viking Scientist.* New York: Elsevier/Nelson, 1979.

---. *William Beebe, Underwater Explorer.* Champaign, IL: Garrard, 1976.

---. *William F. Halsey, Five Star Admiral.* Champaign, IL: Garrard, 1970.

---. *William Tecumseh Sherman, Defender of the Union.* Englewood Cliffs: Prentice, 1970.

---. *Wonders of Alligators and Crocodiles.* New York: Dodd, 1973.

---. *Wonders of Crows.* New York: Dodd, 1979.

---. *Wonders of Egrets, Bitterns, and Herons.* New York: Dodd, 1982.

---. *Wonders of Frogs and Toads.* New York: Dodd, 1975.

---. *Wonders of Raccoons.* New York: Dodd, 1977.

---. *Wonders of Sharks.* New York: Dodd, 1984.

---. *A World Explorer: Ponce de Leon.* Champaign, IL: Garrard, 1965.

Boyd, Selma

---. *Footprints in the Refrigerator.* New York: F. Watts, 1982.

---. *The How: Making of the Best of a Mistake.* New York: Human Sciences, 1981.

---. *I Met A Polar Bear.* New York: Lothrop, Lee and Shepard, 1983.

Braune, Anna

---. *Honey Chile.* Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1937.

Brewton, John Edmund

---. *Poetry Time: Inspirational Poems for Families to Share With Young Children.* Nashville: The Upper Room, 1953.

---. *Birthday Candles Burning Bright.* New York: Macmillan, 1960.

---. *Bridled With Rainbows.* New York: Macmillan, 1949.

---. *Gaily We Parade.* New York: Macmillan, 1940.

---. *In the Witch's Kitchen.* New York: Crowell, 1980.

Buffett, Jimmy, and Savannah Jane Buffett

---. *The Jolly Mon.* San Diego: Harcourt, 1988.

Bunce, William H.

---. *Fish are Fighters in Alabama.* Wetumpka: Wetumpka Printing, 1941.

---. *Son of the Iroquois.* Philadelphia: Macrae-Smith, 1936.

---. *Trails: A Book of Animal Stories.* Nashville: Broadman, 1935.

---. *Chula, Son of the Mound Builders.* New York: E. P. Dutton, 1942.

---. *Dragon Prows Westward.* New York: Harcourt, 1946.

---. *Freight Train.* New York: Putnam's, 1954.

---. *Here Comes the School Train.* New York: Dutton, 1953.

---. *Horned Snake Medicine: A Story of the Mound Builders.* New York: Dutton, 1945.

---. *Treasure Was Their Quest.* New York: Harcourt, 1947.

---. *War Belts of Pontiac.* New York: Dutton, 1943.

Butterworth, Emma Macalik

---. *As the Waltz Was Ending.* New York: Four Winds, 1982.

Butterworth, W. E.

---. *Comfort Me With Love.* New York: NAL, 1960.

---. *The Court-Martial.* New York: NAL, 1962.

---. *Fast Green Car.* New York: Norton, 1965.

---. *Hot Seat.* New York: NAL, 1961.

---. *Stock-Car Racer.* New York: Norton, 1966.

---. *The Wonders of Astronomy*. New York: Putnam's, 1964.

---. *The Wonders of Rockets and Missiles*. New York: Putnam's, 1964.

---. *Flat Out*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1965.

---. *Air Evac*. New York: Norton, 1967.

---. *Bryan's Dog*. Cleveland: World, 1967.

---. *Helicopter Pilot*. New York: Norton, 1967.

---. *Hunger for Racing*. New York: Putnam's, 1967.

---. *Li'l Wildcat*. Cleveland: World, 1967.

---. *Maverick on the Mound*. Cleveland: World, 1968.

---. *Orders to Vietnam: A Novel of Helicopter Warfare*. Boston: Little, 1968.

---. *Redline 7100*. New York: Norton, 1968.

---. *Road Races*. New York: Norton, 1967.

---. *Soldiers on Horseback: The Story of the United States Cavalry*. New York: Norton, 1967.

---. *Fast and Smart*. New York: Norton, 1970.

---. *Grand Prix Driver*. New York: Norton, 1969.

---. *Marty and the Micro-Midgets*. New York: Norton, 1970.

---. *Moving West on 122, a Novel*. Boston: Little, 1970.

---. *Racing to Glory*. New York: Putnam's, 1969.

---. *Steve Bellamy: A Novel*. Boston: Little, 1970.

---. *Stop and Search: A Novel of Small Boat Warfare Off Vietnam*. Boston: Little, 1969.

---. *Susan and Her Classic Convertible*. Chicago: Four Winds, 1970.

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---. *The 12-Cylinder Screamer*. New York: Putnam's, 1970.

---. *Crazy to Race*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1971.

---. *Dateline: Talladega*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1972.

---. *Drag Race Driver*. New York: Putnam's, 1971.

---. *Flying Army: The Modern Air Arm of the U.S. Army*. New York: Doubleday, 1971.

---. *The High Wind: The Story of NASCAR Racing*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1971.

---. *A Long Ride on a Cycle*. New York: Putnam's, 1972.

---. *Micro-Midget Racer*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1972.

---. *My Father's Quite a Guy, a Novel*. Boston: Little, 1971.

---. *The Narc*. Chicago: Four Winds, 1972.

---. *Return to Racing*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1971.

---. *Team Racer*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1972.

---. *Wheels and Pistons: The Story of the Automobile*. Chicago: Four Winds, 1971.

---. *Yankee Boy*. New York: World, 1971.

---. *The Racedriver*. New York: Scholastic, 1972.

---. *Black Gold: The Story of Oil*. Chicago: Four Winds, 1973.

---. *Dave White & the Electric Wonder Car*. Chicago: Four Winds, 1974.

---. *Drag Race Driver*. New York: Berkley, 1973.

---. *Race Car Team*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1973.

---. *Return to Daytona*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1974.

---. *Sky-Jacked!* New York: Scholastic, 1973.

---. *Tires & Other Things: Some Heroes of Automotive Evolution*. New York: Doubleday, 1974.

---. *The Twelve Cylinder Screamer*. New York: Berkley, 1973.

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---. *Yankee Driver*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1973.

---. *An Album of Automobile Racing*. New York: F. Watts, 1977.

---. *Careers in the Services: Opportunities From Mechanics to Medicine*. New York: F. Watts, 1976.

---. *Hi-fi: From Edison's Phonograph to Quadraphonic Sound*. Chicago: Four Winds, 1977.

---. *Mighty Minicycles*. New York: Harvey, 1976.

---. *The Roper Brothers and Their Magnificent Steam Automobile*. Chicago: Four Winds, 1976.

---. *The Air Freight Mystery*. New York: Scholastic, 1979.

---. *Next Stop, Earth*. New York: Walker, 1978.

---. *Under the Influence*. Chicago: Four Winds, 1979.

---. *Wrecker Driver*. New York: Scholastic, 1979.

---. *The Hotel Mystery*. New York: Scholastic, 1979.

---. *Flunking Out*. Chicago: Four Winds, 1981.

---. *Hot Wire*. New York: Harvey, 1982.

---. *LeRoy and the Old Man*. Chicago: Four Winds, 1980.

---. *A Member of the Family*. Chicago: Four Winds, 1982.

---. *Moose, the Thing, and Me*. Boston: Houghton, 1982.

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Chase, Richard

---. *Grandfather Tales: American-English Folk Tales*. Boston: Houghton, 1948.

---. *The Jack Tales*. Boston: Houghton, 1943.

---. *Traditional Ballads, Songs, and Singing Games*. Philadelphia: Institute of Folk Music, 1935.

---. *Hullabaloo, and Other Singing Folk Games*. New York: Houghton, 1949.

---. *Jack and the Three Sillies*. Boston: Houghton, 1950.

---. *Wicked John and the Devil*. Boston: Houghton, 1951.

---. *Billy Boy*. San Francisco: Golden Gate Junior Books, 1966.

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Cheney, Cora

---. *Alaska: Indians, Eskimos, Russians, and the Rest*. New York: Dodd, 1980.

---. *The Case of the Iceland Dogs*. New York: Dodd, 1977.

---. *China Sea Roundup*. New York: Knopf, 1960.

---. *The Christmas Tree Hessian*. New York: Holt, 1958.

---. *Crown of the World: A View of the Inner Arctic*. New York: Dodd, 1979.

---. *The Doll of Lilac Valley*. New York: Knopf, 1959.

---. *Fortune Hill*. New York: Holt, 1956.

---. *The Girl at Jungle's Edge*. New York: Knopf, 1962.

---. *The Incredible Deborah.* New York: Scribner, 1967.

---. *The Mystery of the Disappearing Cars.* New York: Knopf, 1964.

---. *The Peg-Legged Pirate of Sulu.* New York: Knopf, 1960.

---. *Plantation Doll.* New York: Holt, 1955.

---. *Profiles From the Past: An Uncommon History of Vermont.* N.p.: Countryman, 1976.

---. *Rendezvous in Singapore.* New York: Knopf, 1961.

---. *The Rocking Chair Buck.* New York: Holt, 1956.

---. *Rumpus on Commodoro Hill.* New York: Holt, 1957.

---. *Tales From a Taiwan Kitchen.* New York: Dodd, 1976.

---. *The Treasures of Lin Li-ti.* New York: Hawthorn, 1969.

---. *Underseas: The Challenge of the Deep Frontier.* New York: Coward-McCann, 1961.

---. *Vermont, the State With the Storybook Past.* Brattleboro, VT: Greene, 1976.

Cocke, Sarah Johnson

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Cotten, Nell

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Daughtry, Duanne

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Ellison, Lucile Watkins

---. *Butter on Both Sides.* New York: Scribner, 1979.

---. *The Tie That Binds.* New York: Scribner, 1981.

---. *A Window to Look Through.* New York: Scribner, 1982.

Fields, Julia

---. *The Green Lion of Zion Street.* New York: McElderry Books, 1988.

Gaither, Frances Ormond Jones

---. *Little Miss Capo.* New York: Macmillan, 1937.

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Gibbons, Faye

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Glendinning, Sally

---. *Doll: Bottle-Nosed Dolphin.* Champaign, IL: Garrard, 1980.

---. *Gargantua, the Mighty Gorilla.* Champaign, IL: Garrard, 1974.

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---. *Jimmy and Joe Find a Ghost.* Ann Arbor: Xerox, 1969.

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---. *Jimmy and Joe Fly a Kite.* Champaign, IL: Garrard, 1970.

---. *Jimmy and Joe Get a Hen's Surprise.* Champaign, IL: Garrard, 1970.

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A Preliminary Listing of Alabama's Afro-American Writers

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Afro-American writers have contributed immensely to our understanding of the Alabama experience. This bibliography is an attempt at documenting those contributions. All types of writing have been listed here including novels, poems, literary criticism, autobiographies, historical studies, and bibliographical studies. Autobiographies written with the assistance of a co-author are also listed. We have already begun revision of the initial attempt at a comprehensive listing. Please send any additions or corrections to the Tutwiler Collection, Birmingham Public Library, 2100 Park Place, Birmingham, Alabama 35203.

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The Forge
T. S. Stribling

T. S. Stribling (1881-1965) won the 1933 Pulitzer Prize for *The Store*, the middle novel of "a penetrating trilogy of the South" that includes also *The Forge* (1931) and *The Unfinished Cathedral* (1934). (Stribling photo courtesy of Read Alabama! The book cover is from the Libarary of Alabama Classics series and has been reproduced with the permission of the University of Alabama Press.)

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ACTE To You

Martha Wall, President

This is the news from across the state.

ACTE Fall Conference

The theme for the ACTE fall conference "Literacy for All" emphasized the importance of early writing experience on the developing reader. Arlene Silberman, the speaker on Friday evening, offered the parents of young children many suggestions for involving their children in early literate behavior. Her book, *Growing Up Writing* is highly recommended reading for parents and teachers. Fred Hoer, state PTA President, and Frankye Underwood, state AEA President, reinforced the necessity of parental involvement in language development and subsequent success in school.

New ideas in the field of literacy growth (whole language instruction and thematic curriculum development) were presented on Saturday by consultants Sandra Burkett and Sherry Swain from the Mississippi Thinking/Writing Institute and by Carol Avery, a first-grade teacher from Millersville, Pennsylvania. Exemplary Alabama teachers presented ideas ranging from storytelling to Shakespeare to Lella Warren, giving participants many practical ideas for their own classrooms.

The importance of higher order thinking skills in the literacy growth of *all* children was emphasized throughout the program, but became the focus of the special afternoon workshop with Carol Schlichter. Carol presented a two-hour awareness session on "Talents Unlimited," a program available to school systems who desire a formal, structured program in teaching high order thinking to all students.

Featured speaker, Richard Lloyd-Jones, scholar and writer from the University of Iowa, gave us the broad view of how our discipline must change in order to produce more literate citizens for the 1990s and beyond. Broadening the "canon" to include the literature of many cultures and working with children in a more interactive classroom were two of the clarion calls of *Democracy Through Language*, the official report of the 1987 English Coalition co-edited by Lloyd-Jones. The full text of his speech will be published in the fall issue of *Alabama English*.

Several groups met during the conference to discuss ideas of how to improve English/language arts instruction in the state. Clyde Cox of Jacksonville State University is heading up a new group called SLATE (Support for the Learning and Teaching of English). Leaders of the National Writing Projects at Troy State, Jacksonville State, and Auburn University met with teachers interested in the work of Alabama's writing projects. ACTE is happy to bring together these various groups at the fall conference and spring meeting.

I would personally like to thank the many Alabama teachers for their long hours of volunteer work in preparing for and presenting this program.

Special thanks go to Mary Linda McDowell, Chair of the English Department at Parker High School, and the English faculty members there for the excellent preparations. We also thank Cleveland Hammonds, Superintendent of Birmingham City Schools, and B. E. Thompson, Principal of Parker High, for making Parker available for the conference. The Parker choir directed by Perry Anderson was one of the highlights of the workshop, and Benny Blaylock and his ROTC unit's assistance in parking was extremely helpful. We also appreciate the PTA respondents to Arlene Silberman's Friday night presentation and the many parents who came to that session.

I would also like to extend a word of thanks to Willie Mae Crews, who coordinated the arrangements; to Vasha Rosenblum for her excellent storytelling session; to Arlene Silberman, Richard Lloyd-Jones, and Carol Schlichter for their thought-provoking presentations; to Ann Boozer, who coordinated the workshop sessions; and to the members of the ACTE board for their advice and assistance. But a special thanks goes to Peggy Swoger for planning the workshop and for obtaining the superb speakers.

SLATE

Clyde Cox, the new ACTE SLATE representative, has recruited Emil Kaul from Bullock County High School to serve as our press agent. We appreciate Emil's willingness to serve in the capacity. Clyde has also requested that any news or concerns you have about political issues relating to the teaching of English be sent to him at Jacksonville State University.

Literary Festival

Tom Brown, Chair of the English Department at University of Alabama at Birmingham and ACTE board member, directed the Southern Literary Festival April 6-8, 1989, on the UAB campus. This event is sponsored by and Alabama Humanities Foundation and UAB's Department of English, Town and Gown Theater, and College of Arts and Humanities. Writers who read from their works included Vicki Covington, Fannie Flagg, Marie Jemison, Sonia Sanchez, Rose Sangers, and Anne Nall Stallworth. The productions performed by Town and Gown Theater were *Crimes of the Heart, Night Mother*, and *I Don't Want to be Zelda Anymore*. Over 21 universities participated in this event.

The 1990 Southern Literary Festival will be held at Jackson State University, Jackson, Mississippi, on April 5-7. For information contact Tom Brown at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Sixteenth Annual University of Alabama Symposium

Myron Tuman, Professor of English at the University of Alabama and ACTE board member, directed the sixteenth annual University of Alabama Symposium held October 26-29 at the Paul W. Bryant Conference Center. The topic was "Literacy on Line: The Promise (and Perils) of Reading and Writing with Computers." The conference addressed the impact that computers are having on literacy. Myron Tuman's book, *A Preface to Literacy: An Inquiry into Pedagogy, Practice, and Progress*, was reviewed by Thomas Brennan in the fall issue of *Alabama English*.

Achievement Awards State Coordinator

Avis Satterfield from Grissom High School in Huntsville has agreed to serve as the Achievement Awards State Coordinator for Alabama. She is replacing Peggy Guerin of Huntsville High School. Peggy has done an outstanding job for us, and we are very grateful to her for the years she has served. We are looking forward to working with Avis in her new capacity.

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Distinguished Folk of Read Alabama!

In 1940 Lella Warren wrote *Foundation Stone,* a novel based on her family's migration from South Carolina to Clayton County, Alabama. When this novel was recently reprinted by the University of Alabama Press, Nancy Anderson, an Assistant Professor at Auburn University at Montgomery and an ACTE member, wrote the introduction. In addition, Nancy has collected and edited unpublished short stories written by Lella Warren. The book, *Family Fiction,* is now available from Summa Publications, Inc., P. O. Box 10725, Birmingham, AL 35216. Nancy presented an excellent session on Lella Warren at the fall ACTE workshop.

And speaking of Read Alabama!, Marilyn Lewis from Huntsville received a surprise at the ACTE fall workshop. While browsing through the display of books by Alabama authors, she saw copies of *Ollie Miss* and *Jule* which, like *Foundation Stone,* have been recently reprinted by the University of Alabama Press. Marilyn's husband's uncle, George Wylie Henderson, originally from Tuskegee, wrote these books, and according to Marilyn, the family did not know they had been reissued. Peggy Swoger presented the two books to Marilyn at the Saturday Luncheon.

Publication Of New Literary Journal

Norman McMillan, Chair of the English Department at the University of Montevallo and past president of ACTE, now serves on the editorial board of *Thema,* a recently published quarterly journal. This journal is composed of diversified poems and short stories on a single theme. University of Alabama graduates and students are encouraged to submit stories and poems. Themes for upcoming issues are as follows:

February 1, 1990
"The Last Time I Saw Jane"

May 1, 1990
"The Thursday Night League"

November 1, 1990
"Teacups in the Sand"

Birmingham Site for National Writing Project

Dave Roberts, Professor of English at Samford, announced that Samford University has approved a National Writing Project for its campus. We are anxiously waiting to hear of approval from the national board.

Teacher of the Year

Congratulations to Susan Colwater Lloyd, sixth-grade teacher at the Huntsville Academy for Science and Foreign Languages, who was named Teacher of the Year by the State Department of Education.

Establishing Writing Centers

A number of teachers have asked for information in organizing a writing center in their school. If your school or school system needs information on establishing such a center, contact Loretta Cobb at the University of Montevallo or Alan Brown at Livingston University.

Promising Young Writers Contest

NCTE has appointed Peggy Swoger as the chair of the Promising Young Writers Contest for Alabama. Any eighth-grade teacher interested in this contest may contact Peggy for information.

Calendar of Events

The **Gulf Coast Conference on the Teaching of Writing,** co-sponsored by the Sun Belt Writing Project, Richard Graves of Auburn University, Director, and the Wiregrass Writing Project, Betsy Dismukes of Troy State University, Director, will be held at the Grand Hotel at Point Clear, Alabama, on June 5-8, 1990. Concurrent workshop sessions will address the spectrum of writing, kindergarten through college. Guests conducting special workshops will be Lil Brannon, Kenneth Goodman, and Shirley Brice Heath. Hotel reservations should be make directly with the Grand Hotel, but for conference information and registration, write:

Gulf Coast Conference on the
Teaching of Writing
124 McCartha Hall
Troy State University
Troy, Alabama 36082

The **Writing Instruction Technology spring conference** will be held Saturday, April 7, 1990 at the Cole Library on the Jacksonville State University campus.

Also the third **Summer Institute of the Jacksonville State University Writing Project** will be held June 25-July 27, 1990. All teachers from grades K-14 are encouraged to apply. Information and registration forms can be obtained from Lisa Williams, English Department, Jacksonville State University, Jacksonville, Alabama 36265.

The **Wiregrass Writing Project** will be held at Troy State University June 25-July 26. Any teacher interested in obtaining information can write Betsy Dismukes, Troy State University, Troy, Alabama 36082.

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Alabama English is seeking manuscripts for publication in its subsequent issues. We are particularly looking for discussions of classroom method and educational philosophy in the teaching of reading, writing, and literature at all grade levels from kindergarten through college. These articles can range in length from 1250 to 4000 words. We also are interested in publishing teaching tips about classroom assignments and essays discussing professional concerns at either a national or a state level. Teaching tips should be 1000 words or less, and essays about professional concerns should be 250 words or less.

All submissions should be typed double space. Please send three copies. If you want your manuscript returned, please enclose a self-addressed mailing envelope with postage attached by a paper clip.

All manuscripts should follow the guidelines in the most recent edition of the *MLA Handbook*.

Submit manuscripts to the following address:

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Alabama English
Department of English
Auburn University, Alabama 36849

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ALABAMA ENGLISH

Fall 1990 • Volume 2 • Number 2

A Publication of the
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ACTE ALABAMA ENGLISH

A Publication of the Alabama Council of Teachers of English
in cooperation with Auburn University Extension and Auburn University
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Submissions: *Alabama English* welcomes manuscripts from 1250 to 4000 words long about current theory and practice in the teaching of reading, writing, and literature at any grade level; manuscripts approximately 1000 words long as "teaching tips"; and short essays approximately 250 words long about professional concerns. All manuscripts should be typed double space, and three copies should be submitted. For return of manuscript, enclose a self-addressed envelope with stamps attached by a paper clip. Send submissions to Isabelle Thompson, Editor, *Alabama English*, Department of English, Auburn University, Alabama 36849. Suggestions for book reviews should be sent to the review editors.

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Volume 2 Number 2 Fall 1990

ALABAMA ENGLISH

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Editor's Introduction

Isabelle Thompson

Welcome back to another fall, another group of students, and another issue of *Alabama English*. After our special issue about Alabama authors, this issue presents articles on a variety of topics—from writing tutorials to multilingual book corners to works by the students of Hudson Strode.

The issue begins with Richard Lloyd-Jones's keynote address from last fall's conference. This article forecasts major concerns in teaching reading and writing at all grade levels and makes some interesting connections among teaching literature, reading, and writing in meaningful ways for students. The other articles in this issue follow up on Lloyd-Jones's concerns that teachers act as guides for readers and writers and that they establish a holistic context that encourages learning to take place. Muriel Harris's discussion of one-to-one tutoring stresses the importance of a trained coach, or guide, to help writers clarify and express meaning. Linda Gurosky explains how children's books can be used as models for writing as well as lessons for reading. Sandra F. Cooper and Willie Mae Crews incorporate foreign languages into the usual reading and writing practice in English. Mary Beth Culp and Deborah Hobbs describe a successful program that uses writing as a means for learning in content areas. Carrie Lugar Slayback discusses the benefits of clustering in teaching reading and writing to children.

Two final articles in this issue look back to our spring issue about Alabama authors. John Thomas provides an interview with Mary Ward Brown, the writer of *Tongues of Flame*. G. E. Geiger offers a bibliography of works done by the students of Hudson Strode, the famous teacher of fiction writing at University of Alabama, and includes the works of Strode himself.

Before I leave you to your reading, I want to point out two upcoming attractions that are mentioned in this issue. The first is a special issue entitled "Literature in the Classroom" we are planning for publication next fall. Mary Ann Rygiel from Auburn High School will be the guest editor. The Call for Special Issue gives the details. The second is our annual fall conference to be held November 2-3 in Huntsville. Peggy Swoger gives the details for this gathering in "ACTE to You."

See you in Huntsville. Happy fall.

Call for Special Issue

Alabama English would like to invite the elementary and secondary school teachers of Alabama to contribute their best ideas on teaching literature to a special Fall 1991 issue of the journal. The deadline for manuscripts is January 31, 1990. Manuscripts may range from 3 to 15 typescript pages. Each article will be submitted for editorial review to two reviewers experienced in the classroom; contributors will be informed of editorial decisions in writing by March 31, 1991.

The focus of this special issue, as indicated above, is Literature in the Classroom. You may treat any aspect of this topic which would be relevant to the classroom practices and concerns of the teachers of Alabama. You may wish to describe special individualized or workshop programs in literature, or you may have had particular success with a program of children's literature, adolescent literature—or a program of traditional classics. Perhaps you have found a recent theory of education, such as the whole language philosophy, to be a powerful aid in structuring your classroom. You may particularly like the work of Kenneth Goodman, Nancie Atwell, or Louise Rosenblatt. You may want to share your insights on monitoring reading progress or share your success in using reading response journals. These ideas are meant as suggestions to stimulate your thinking about the topic; they are not all-inclusive guidelines. Let your best classroom work with literature and students be your guide. We will, however, be looking for manuscripts that give evidence of arising out of real contact with students and which have a potential applicability to other teachers' classrooms. A special note for college and university teachers: your contributions to this special issue are welcome if they address pedagogy.

Articles should be double-spaced and submitted with an original and two copies. For bibliography format, follow MLA guidelines. For return of your work, submit a self-addressed, stamped manila envelope. Mail your manuscript to me at the following address:

Mary Ann Rygiel, guest editor
Alabama English
Department of English
Auburn University, Alabama 36849

If you have an idea but wish to discuss it first, feel free to call me after 4:00 p.m. at 205/821-0841.

Literacy for the 90s and Beyond

The Keynote Address from the ACTE Fall Conference

"Literacy for All"

November 3-4, 1989

Richard Lloyd-Jones

Richard Lloyd-Jones has taught at the University of Iowa since 1951, serving 10 years as chair of the Department of English and director of the School of Letters. He chaired CCCC in 1977 and was president of NCTE in 1986. He was given the distinguished service award of the Iowa CTE in 1980 and the Francis Andrew March award of ADE for service to the profession in 1987. With Richard Braddock he wrote Research in Written Composition (1963) *and with Andrea Lunsford he edited* The Report of English Coalition Conference (1989). *He is co-designer of Primary Trait Scoring for use in evaluation of student writing. He previously spoke on literacy at the University of Alabama conference on "Literacy as a Human Problem" in 1981.*

To talk about literacy we have to begin with a definition of terms, rather in the manner of a formal debater or perhaps a writer of laws. Literacy is one of those equivocal terms used to represent a broad range of notions. At one time it might have meant "the ability to sign one's name" as opposed to marking an X, the most rudimentary command of written language. That ability is implicit when we talk of pre-literate or oral societies in discussions of how the invention of written language affected a culture. For other people literacy has meant "deeply committed to Belles Lettres" as in "Man or Woman of Letters." For late Victorians literacy seems often to represent the product of a good liberal education, and now it seems to suggest to some people acquaintance with arcane critical theory and avant garde literature. To be literate in that sense you have to be "one up."

Current fashion among educational politicians perhaps favors a meaning dealing with adherence to standard English, but often (especially among those fond of history) it is closer to what E.D. Hirsch seems to mean by the term "cultural literacy." Surely we cannot be considered adept at handling our language unless we have a broad grasp of the accumulated meanings that reside in words and phrases, so I lean toward that broad definition. But I'm cautious about the temptation to see in the past a golden age and use "literacy" as a means of avoiding current realities. To talk usefully about literacy, we ought to be concerned with how language represents what we know and how we value our experience, but literacy also must guide us to recognize crucial features of current events so that we can make sensible adaptations to the future. The literate Victorian is simply not equipped to face the twenty-first century.

My definition requires me also to recognize that the second term—the 90s and beyond—is not as clear as it might at first seem. In a way I am talking about next fall's classes. But I really am looking to the future our present students will experience. Like any classroom teacher, I am worried about the individuals who come to me and how I can be useful to them. I have to think of their goals, their world to come, and their world as it is now, if I am to help them. One important way in which the English Coalition conference differed from those held by deans and principals and superintendents and educational philosophers and politicians is that we participants all live in some classroom facing real students. I don't mean that we were obsessed by the question of what we do on Monday morning—we weren't short term thinkers—but we were concerned with the difference between what exists and what some people think ought to exist. Any plan for the 90s and beyond has to start by considering who is going to come to our classroom and why—as well as what we have to offer and what our whole society needs of its citizens.

"Citizens" is a reminder for me to look backward a bit. By the end of its three weeks, the Coalition conference had decided that its theme was "Democracy Through Language," a social view of what English teachers do. Recall how often in our first century of existence as a nation we spent time worrying about a distinctive American voice. The British dismissed us as colonials, and that is a kind of identity. Emerson made a fuss about the American scholar and poet. We still teach Walt Whitman with chauvinist pride. Even if people here in the South didn't want Yankee voices, neither did they want European voices. We used McGuffey readers to inculcate a sense of national pride and social virtue. McGuffey's emphasis on patriotism was a substitute for primers that dealt primarily in religion.

At the end of the last century and the first few decades of this one, a major goal of the schools was to standardize the American experience and language usage, to root out variation, especially among immigrants. We might argue about how our elders defined the American standard, but we can hardly deny the importance they attached to the image of the melting pot. They admitted that our people came from somewhere else, but they wanted us to shed our individual pasts and adopt a modified English past. The Native American in this view might be a noble savage or a drunken bum, but either way didn't count. Neither North nor South imagined much would come of African experiences, and the Asian experience could be dismissed as "the Yellow Horde." It may have been a collective defensiveness—as Europeans tended to think—or the necessary discipline in forging a nation—as American commentators prefer—but it certainly emphasized commonality. Homogenization. That goal is not dead, of course. It is the business of the "English Only" people.

Against these pressures to conform ran the Romantic notion of independence, revolution, individuality, lighting out for the territories to escape from the social limits of the town. To be sure, the people who lit out weren't the school teachers nor the power brokers. And communities were still small. I've always been intrigued by how my father's family, which left Wales for Wisconsin in 1844, moved like an Old Testament tribe with the children and their children's spouses and their grandchildren. The extended family still provided a human scale for social experience. The idea of a massive nation of a quarter of billion people was fantasy, but even so, sub-communities were part of the reality of the late nineteenth century and still are, albeit in different forms. We need people at touching distances, people we recognize to be like ourselves. I stress this need for closeness, because I believe the first need of every individual is to have companions; a primary function of language is to identify the people we walk with. I grant this is usually an oral function, not a written one, but it permeates all language uses. It is therefore a major part of the literacy we envision for our students. Can we use writing to touch our friends?

All sorts of revisionist metaphors are being proposed as alternatives to the "melting pot," a term even in its literal sense a bit removed from our experience. Jesse Jackson has used his grandmother's patchwork quilt to suggest how many different kinds of people can be stitched together to make a whole nation. That metaphor is a variant of the rainbow coalition, the image of the separate colors of the spectrum making a whole rainbow. I saw another essay contrasting a good vegetable stew with a puree, much to the advantage of the stew, of course. Having been fond of archeology and the classical world, I lean toward the mosaic with its many tiles. You may have others. The point is that our future requires an image of individuality within a broad likeness to capture our sense of nationhood. All of the massive nations of the world—consider how the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China are struggling with diversity—and many of the small nations as well face the same need, for clearly the twenty-first century will require that we learn how to live comfortably together even though individuals will still seek their identity within much smaller groups. To serve our society—our democracy—as well as to serve individuals within our nation, we have to discover a pattern of literacy that allows us to negotiate unity without depriving us of our separateness.

You have probably noted that I'm asking a lot. We want our students to master their own dialect and possibly several others for speaking, one or more for writing, and a passel for reading and listening. Indeed, we'd be happiest to have them also master the languages of graphics, mathematics, and gesture, not to mention a second or third natural language. Although we English teachers have sometimes been viewed as a bit grabby in selecting subject matter, even we allow that others must teach most of these other languages. We even talk of writing across the curriculum in a way that implies all teachers are essentially teachers of language arts. We are just the ones fully defined by that label. But the point remains that if we and our students are going to live in the twenty-first century, we cannot limit our concern to teaching social graces or the niceties of one power-centered dialect. We have to offer the range and flexibility that will allow our students to be comfortable in many kinds of situations.

As much can be said for the readings we choose. We need readings to represent the diversity of American culture and the range of world cultures. We need to face the conflict of values among groups and the horror of some situations unlike our own. I'm always amazed by how we imagine we can shield children from unpleasant realities when we have drug problems in the elementary school, pregnancies in the middle school, and murders in the high school. The children in upper socio-economic neighborhoods—to jargonize our concern—live in single-parent homes; everywhere moving day is tomorrow. We need literature not only to carry us out of our own time and place, but to help us formulate—make sense of—our present place and the places of the people with whom we will live. That means we'll have to teach some of the old standards in new ways, but we also have to explore many texts new to us, too. Some may be trivial, works to be discarded, as some older texts are now discovered to be trivial and discardable, but we have to recognize that literacy, that being literate, is not limited to what our parents and grandparents studied.

At this point Don Hirsch or Lynn Cheney would probably give you a list. After all, we have only finite time and energy, so we have to pick titles for our classes. We've all played that game of selecting texts; it's fun when it's played with colleagues face-to-face, and we all know the needs of the classroom we have to preside over. If you and I right now played "Make a Reading List," we might agree often, but I imagine even in a mass society yoked by television, you'd find some works just right in Alabama that I'd rather not tackle in Iowa, and vice versa. And since I mostly conjure up the image of college sophomores in a research university, I'll make other kinds of distinctions, too. The point is that we begin with our broad professional experience of literature of all kinds and try to match a list with our students. A group of us would get lots of pleasure and some education from negotiating our differences. Our own horizons are broadened as we trade titles. To the extent that published lists serve this game and this purpose, so much the better, but when they are accompanied by standardized tests and other coercive practices, then they are a hazard. The face-to-face discussion with—ultimately—individual choice is important in adapting to the diversity of our students—albeit somewhat tempered by the costs of maintaining adequate school libraries.

I'm not saying that the individual choice is unlimited. Professional responsibility requires us to take into account the sensibilities of individuals. Literature can be a therapy or a trauma depending on the circumstances. So too we have to find a balance between introducing a child to new ideas and values and threatening our sense of order. I hardly need to say that it is not easy, perhaps not even always possible. The easy way out is to pick bland stuff that only bores everyone to death by not providing challenges to the imagination. Such blandness also lies by denying the complexity of the world we actually live in. Literature legitimately offers brief escapes, but we cannot rest in escapism.

What are the criteria we should apply? First, the literature should help us make sense of the world we inhabit. That sense-making capability is what we provide pre-schoolers when we offer stories of home and hearth. We give them the structures that allow them to connect their sensations of daily life. It is possible to make such facts into tiresome Dick-and-Jane stories, or perhaps what Charles Dickens's Mr. Gradgrind called "fact." This argument for the uses of literature was current a century and a half ago, and Dickens came down on the side of imagination—fairy tales and adventures and fantasy. Symbolically virtue was found in Mr. Sleary's circus. We seek a balance, of course, but we need to be careful in choosing the stories of reification, the fact stories, that we depict a world fairly close to what the children experience. Some of the suburban, mother-at-home, two-cars-in-the-garage stories are to some children as fantastic as stories of inter-planetary warfare, and more misleading. From the first step of discovering relationships among commonplace events, we grow toward the recognition of differences and problems. We later discover that *our* story is not necessarily *the* story, but sometimes we also discover that our confusion is not ours alone. These are the points argued for in much of adolescent literature.

That leads to the second objective—to discover the world we *don't* inhabit, the world of others. The others exist in space and time: other regions—or sub-cultures, or nations—and other times. The world of "others" is so much larger than we can even sample decently that our choices sometimes seem random, incoherent. Those who want to limit "otherness" to the writings of Western males have an advantage there, especially if they have royalist leanings. Generally court literature is well preserved and shares a common value. In fact, that royal tradition with minor republican epi-cycles is most of the Western tradition, and it forms the norm from which modern traditions diverge. Even in the United States the democratization of experience is mostly a product of the twentieth century, and we aren't altogether comfortable with it. Many of the works on the sharply skewed lists of "a 100 best" are still worth our time both as representatives of the values of another age and as statements about the human condition. Many still repay our efforts to make ourselves into suitable audiences in order to understand even the basic messages. Alas, many aren't worth that effort, and the list as a whole is a bad sample. Keeping dead texts on our list merely alienates our students—or shows up our inadequacy as teachers. They can be dropped.

In their place we have the world to draw on. For most of us even the full range of American literature is unknown ground. We often talk of the literature of minorities—the something-Americans. Regional literatures are also important. I think courses in Southern literature are perhaps the best developed, but the other areas of the country have fine local authors, and they gradually work their way into secondary school texts and specialized college courses. The title "Popular Literature," hiding science fiction, mysteries, romances, adventures, in fact includes large bodies of highly competent story telling largely ignored by the elite, yet part of the fiber of the lives of many Americans—the stories they really use to explain their experiences. Beyond our borders are whole libraries of literature—much in translation. We can live vicariously in the skins of many kinds of people.

I don't have any tidy solution to the problem of too many choices. My messy solution is to suggest that we lead with our own enthusiasms, counting on other teachers in other classrooms to offer theirs. Yes, we all ought to have read the Declaration of Independence and perhaps *Hamlet* and *Huckleberry Finn* (although we haven't), but it is more important to think of common readings in terms of many overlapping but not co-incident circles. Most of us will have read some texts, many of us will have read some others, and all of us will read good books that are practically ours alone. Given the facts of limited publication, the power of contagion of interests, and the similarity of works from a particular place and time, that diversity is not really chaotic. The mass audience for reading is not as evident as the mass audience for television, but it is of the same order.

I said at the outset I was dealing with literacy in the broad sense—and so I am. This discussion of the literary materials—reading—is but to solidify my concern with meaning, what written language actually represents to human beings. To talk of literacy exclusively in terms of usage, or formal correctness, or spelling seems to me debilitating, but all too common. All variations in language signify something, often unintended, so we have to worry about details in order to discover the exact meaning, whether accidental or intentional, but we needn't pick nits and we certainly should not deal in formal prescriptions without a concern for meaning. We should rather try to identify what the variations mean and then judge whether that meaning is useful and intended. We don't have to be lawyers to know that intent is always a vexing question, but it is at the heart of communication.

If we are to help our students become more literate as writers, where should we begin? First, we should make communication within the classroom a reality. Communication requires back-and-forth utterance, preferably among several people. That probably means real talk, conversation driven to a point, but genuinely conversation. That is, knowledge and opinions held separately by individual students need to be melded into broader understandings. The need for melding suggests that writing is not altogether solitary. Even in our most secluded moments of composition we imagine another—perhaps another self, perhaps God, perhaps a person—who will consider what we say. For most of us, and especially for those with limited social experience, the actual presence of another person is probably helpful. At least, discovering the needs of others is vital to our sense of exigency, of the need to say something, of wanting to be understood and believed. Merely writing to fill an assignment rarely produces compelling prose.

Unless you assume that students draft material much more readily than I do, probably they ought to talk about their ideas before they write them. It's hard to change a written text; oral texts are ordinarily in flux, so while we are settling our minds, we might well remain oral. We also will find it easier to face our ignorance in conversation and thus accept the need to acquire information to fill out our sketchy ideas. Some new interactive computer programs have learned to ask helpful questions, but I think flesh-and-blood people are rather more supportive, albeit potentially more threatening too. You can call the activity pre-writing, or invention, or applying a heuristic if you like jargon, but the point is that negotiation with a reader—actual or imagined—is basic to literacy, and the classroom is a good place for lots of trial runs.

Sooner or later someone has to make a draft. The preliminary flux has to acquire some firm shape. Appropriate shapes in words and sentences are part of our literate experience. Mostly we learn words and sentences before we start school; the school experience builds on a very large base acquired in daily life. As much can be said of the forms of discourse, but even as adults we have limited skills in describing those forms—not that many people are accomplished in using even one system of grammatical description. Our knowledge of discourse and of most grammar is tacit—quite real and often adept in producing language, but only marginally described in overt terms. For me literacy is revealed in the production of discourse, not in the ability to describe it, but many of the issues of classroom strategy cluster around the questions of overt knowledge. Our practices of mass testing work better when directed toward systems of description than they do in measuring actual success in writing, so school management sometimes actually works against making better writers. The school system concentrates on anatomy rather than on physiology.

When we are writing in an unfamiliar situation, it helps to have rough formal guidance about how to proceed, but it is easy to overstate how much help is needed by ignoring how formal understanding is acquired in social discourse. If the student is writing on a moderately familiar topic to a familiar audience in a non-threatening situation, probably an organizing formula is irrelevant. And to provide unmastered ideas to an exotic audience in hostile circumstances—like writing the first exam in a first course in chemistry—probably requires more help than a formula can provide. If you haven't figured out what chemistry is and think the teacher is a nerd or worse, you won't write well. In your anxiety you won't even be able to spell or make subjects and predicates agree, but the resultant diagnosis of illiteracy leads to the wrong medicine.

Note that again I'm calling for pedagogical tact in helping writers produce a rough text. Offer enough help to forestall paralysis, but let students solidify the positions tried out in preliminary discussions. Francis Bacon praised writing as requiring exactness, but that doesn't mean that the first draft is cut into granite. Once there is a working paper, the group can talk again. Except for providing a model reader with useful questions and for insisting on civility, the teacher's goal might be to fade into the background. The writer's obligation is to teach and persuade her or his peers; the reader's obligation is to be a fit audience; the teacher's obligation is to provide the context within which such communication can take place.

What happens to the conventional issues of literacy? How can we live without exercise books? Most people are tacitly conventional when they sense the need. Learning conventions is rarely a problem except for the learning disabled—and that's another issue. Kids quickly learn that games are better played by the rules, and they are often compulsively fair. Even those who regularly violate the laws of the state or nation conform to the rules of their own group. The issue is to discover the rules of which group. Labov demonstrated that alterations in dialect choices among young people often precede changes in life goals. The children didn't master Edited American English in school so much as they saw their future in positions requiring Edited American English. The trick is to convince people that they have a future in which the rules of mechanics are socially useful. Not hoity-toity social. Considerate of the needs of others. Standard forms to eliminate puzzles or ambiguity. Part of the code system of sharing. The code system is complex, and some variations may represent avowals of separateness: "I belong among my friends, but teachers and others are not my friends." That attitude is probably hostility, not ignorance, and requires a different sort of response. Social anger will hardly be alleviated by admonitions about usage.

You'll note that I have not dealt with literacy as a scientific positivist might. I'm not interested in trying to quantify symptoms, nor even in offering a controlled study of classroom methods. For the moment I'm taking for granted the useful techniques for helping adult non-readers who have decided they must learn to read. I am emphasizing, as I think the English Coalition conference suggested, that literacy in the broad sense is more than knowing how written marks represent speech. If we stop there in planning school programs, we won't even give students the necessary skills to survive in the meanest part of the workplace. Literacy necessary to preserve a democratic nation and to fuel human aspiration, social responsibility, and self-awareness requires us to be sensitive to how variations in language shape different experiences and in differing contexts cue different human responses. We need to sample as wide a variety as possible of eloquent and precisely wrought human utterances—those of our own community and those of many others. In short, we need to enlarge our capacity to explore the world symbolically so we can climb beyond the limits of time, space, and brutish sensation.

In all classes teachers talk about the most minute of specific details, but primarily in order to make major points. A multiple choice test on the mastery of the minutiae proves little without a clear sense of how the detail is to be interpreted. It is not true in learning that if you take care of the pence, the pounds will take care of themselves; rather we must keep our eyes steadfastly on the target. The details focused on today are minor as such, so long as they and ones used tomorrow represent different major issues. Since language and experience are for all practical purposes coincident, we will not run out of problems to discuss so long as life is in us, and life is the key to literacy—insatiable curiosity and receptiveness to what some call the unthinkable. No teacher—no series of classes—can "cover" the materials of literacy. At best we sample and thus point directions for each person to explore lifelong. Sometimes we have to circle back to help someone with a rudimentary problem, but that is a means, not an end.

We shall know that we have adequate classrooms when adults are fascinated by—not fearful of—the quirkiness of language, when they are comfortable with verbal ambiguity, and when they keep lists of stories and essays and plays and articles they want to read when they have time. They won't cover the list, and they'll have days when the words won't come right, but they'll be able to touch their neighbors with language. To be literate in the next century will be to be comfortable knowing that you are defined by your language and confident in knowing that you can share your existence—your knowledge and skill—with other people you treasure.

· POET'S · CORNER ·

To David

Sandra C. Murray
Bradshaw High School, Florence Alabama

How strange
You must find a gift such as this,
a $3.19 spiral notebook.
How strange the teacher/stranger
who hands it to you
trusting you will understand its purpose.
The aim of the poet, as Eliot said,
is to "state a vision." And in stating it,
man begins to understand himself, mankind.
Man's visions, your visions,
are worth stating.
Two brief visions you shared with me
(one—a reflection on life and death and guilt—
the other—a good-by to a stifling southern town)
prove you have much to say
to yourself, to man.
Take these empty pages
and fill them with your words, your visions.

But if you wish to pass
the whole suggestion off as an absurd idea
from a meddling stranger,
you have my permission to make
three hundred paper airplanes
start twenty fires
or play mindless games of tic-tac-toe,
for other empty pages will wait until you are
ready.

Mary Ann Rygiel recepient of Reader's Digest Teacher/Scholar Award

Mary Ann Rygiel was the recepient of the Reader's Digest Teacher/Scholar Award for the 1989-90 academic year. Granting a year's paid leave to an elementary or secondary teacher from each state, the award funds research in the humanities. Recepients are selected by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Mary Ann has spent her year researching the plays of Shakespeare. Here is a chronology of her work:

> During the summer and fall of 1989 I worked on background material to the four Shakespeare tragedies I concentrated on. This background study consisted of works of history and biography and also studies of the medieval and Elizabethan theatre, including stage construction and stage conventions, audience composition, and acting companies. In December 1989 I had access to the collections of the Folger Library in Washington, DC. I examined various printed and manuscript works of the sixteenth century which yield insights into Shakespeare's plays. Perhaps only an English teacher can understand what a thrill it was to hold an Elizabethan grammar, inspect its definitions of the eight parts of speech (not always defined as we would define them, as for example: "interjection betokeneth a sodein passion of the minde, under an unperfect voice"), and to see student graffiti in brown ink in the margins and on the backpages of the book. While I can't say I approve of student effusions extempore in book margins, I found this marginalia a reasurring confirmation of the universality of human nature, as each one journeys through the seven ages of life. The Folger reading room has stained glass windows on one wall depicting this journey. After this wonderful leave, I may find myself in the same case as the reluctant schoolboy with "satchel/And shining morning face, creeping like snail/ Unwillingly to school."
>
> In the winter and spring of 1990 I read selected works on the literary critical definition of tragedy and studied commentaries on the four "school tragedies" (*Romeo & Juliet*, *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, and *Macbeth*). I continued to read works of history and biography throughout these literary critical studies; the greater factuality of such works as a 1988 study of the Spanish Armada seems enhanced to me in middle-age. By contrast the glow surrounding works of literary criticism seems distinctly less ethereal and more gaseous to me now than it did when I was an undergraduate over two decades ago. In the summer I conducted two workshops for area English teachers. Such oddities of social history as a recipe for rose petal bread can be used for their little contribution to our understanding of, say, *Romeo and Juliet*. I also did some writing during this leave, to try to fix on paper my new awareness of Elizabethan and Jacobean life as it bears on the plays, before my re-entry into the theatre of the classroom.

Working One-to-One with Writers: The Necessity of Tutorial Collaboration

Muriel Harris

Muriel Harris is a professor of English and Writing Lab Director at Purdue University. She founded and continues to edit the Writing Lab Newsletter, *edited* Tutoring Writing: A Sourcebook for Writing Labs, *and wrote* Teaching One-to-One: The Writing Conference. *Her forthcoming concise grammar handbook is the* Prentice-Hall Reference Guide to Grammar and Usage. *In her articles, book chapters, and conference presentations, it is apparent that she is a confirmed advocate and proselytizer for the writing center approach to teaching writing.*

Current approaches to teaching writing have turned a once quiet activity into a lively hum of talk and interaction. We've moved from an emphasis on products—papers handed to teachers, graded, and returned—to an emphasis on processes—all the backing and forthing involved in planning, writing, revising, and editing. And we have a more social view, one that stresses the value of talk in the writing classroom and writing center. We see the task of writers as that of learning the language and conventions of various discourse groups so that they can enter the conversation of such groups. Collaboration, interaction, response, talk—all have become activities for writers to engage in, and putting students in peer response groups to look at and discuss each other's drafts has become a common activity. All that classroom talk and feedback among peers is important and useful, but it is not sufficient. Student response groups are helpful and compatible with the social emphasis in writing instruction. But they cannot be the only form of collaborative learning we offer our students because writers also need some time with skilled, trained tutors or teachers in the one-to-one settings of tutorials or conferences.

Peer response groups in the classroom can work collaboratively on a variety of tasks, but in terms of looking at drafts of each other's papers, the usual emphasis is on offering responses. This is a time when readers can comment on what they like in a draft, what needs more information, what might be revised. The feedback is based on the skills students bring to the task, and presumably, one of the benefits of response groups, in addition to the socially negotiated knowledge that is generated, is that reading the papers of other writers helps students learn how to read critically. However, we cannot expect peers to come to group work as experts, though

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we hope they learn as they progress. We also cannot expect response groups to offer each writer in the group all the help that is needed. Though peer response groups can and should be part of writing classrooms, we need a complement. Since I spend the majority of my teaching time in writing lab tutorials, I think of that complement as being time spent with tutors, though it can also be with teachers who hold conferences or have workshop classrooms or manage somehow to meet individually with their students, even for brief periods. So, though I live in the world of tutors and will use the term "tutor" here in describing what can and should be accomplished in one-to-one settings, teachers from the earliest primary grades (Turbil) to the college classroom can consider similar activities for their one-to-one time with their students, though teachers cannot easily remove themselves from the role of grader or evaluator into the role of collaborator.

One of the most prevalent needs I've observed among writers as they work on drafts is to ask questions. "What are some ways to start an introductory paragraph?" they ask. "Why does this part sound so choppy?" "I can't figure out where to go next. What should I do?" "This sentence has some information from a couple of sources. When do I need to have references?" "Does a comma go there?" On and on the questions go, and if those questions come up in response groups, the tendency is to answer them, usually rather specifically. "Do this" or "do that." But that doesn't help the writer in the long haul because the question is likely to come up again, and the writer has not gained any insights, strategies, or independence. Because tutors are trained to help students learn about writing, not how to fix a particular paper, they know that their job is not to hand out answers. Just as teachers know that telling a student what to do is not the most useful solution, the standard, often repeated maxims in tutor training are "When you give a person a fish, you feed him for a day; when you teach him how to fish, you help him for a lifetime" and "Help the writer; don't fix the paper." Tutors thus develop the seemingly maddening habit of answering a question with a question.

student: What else can I say here? This paragraph is too short.

tutor: What point are you trying to make here?

student: Well, I'm describing how it felt when I first saw snow.

tutor: OK, what you *saw*, so description is based on our senses. Which of your senses have you used so far?

student: Umm, let's see. I talked about how bright the light was shining off the mountain side. This sentence includes the stuff about the whiteness and how the stuff sticks to everything, each little tree branch and pine needle.

tutor: What sense were you using for that?

student: That's sight. Right?

tutor: Sure, but what other senses do you have?

student: There's sight . . . and hearing. . . .

tutor: (silence)

student: Well, what I heard was the crunch under my skis, sort of a sharp, brittle noise. . . .

tutor: What else?

student: There's taste and touch too. Oh yah, the coldness of the flakes on my tongue. No smell that I can remember. Hey, that's interesting . . . you can smell rain . . . well, you smell wet earth or wet sidewalks. But with snow, there was none of that. . . . OK, so I can maybe say that . . . about the absence as well as what I could feel.

The point of contrast here is that the student was moved from a somewhat passive stance ("tell me what to do") to the active role of solving her own problem, learning how to check her senses for more descriptive detail. Her question turned into an opportunity for her to learn a method for developing a paragraph. Writers need opportunities to ask their questions and to learn how they can solve their own problems. They can learn strategies, find their own answers, and become independent. But being a questioner is hard. In tutor training sessions I see peer tutors struggling to learn this skill. They especially need help in learning how to phrase their questions so that they are leading students forward in their thinking. Guiding learning through questioning is an art, and it is not the kind of skill that we can expect participants in peer response groups to call up every time they hear each other's questions. But we should expect to do this kind of questioning in one-to-one sessions where the focus is on the writer and the session includes someone trained to move through this kind of activity.

Writers also need supporting voices, voices that encourage them to keep moving forward with a piece of writing. Student writers often do not have writing problems but confidence problems. They are quick to discard a draft that is deemed hopeless before it ever had a chance to develop. As a tutor, I often see students at the edge of despondency because they think so little of their own skills that they show me their works-in-progress with abject apologies. "This is pretty bad, but it's all I've got so far," says a student as he plops a paper on the table. "I just can't get going. I'm a terrible writer," says another as she clutches her sheets of paper to her chest. In peer groups, there can be support, often strong support for writers, but peer groups are not always on call when needed. And their comments are not always taken at face value or trusted. Students know that peer pressure dictates going along and being cooperative. That translates into not criticizing your peers in the group since critiques can offend the writer. Some peer groups seem to overcome this barrier, but I meet frequently with students who have bounced from classroom response groups to the writing lab, looking for "real" help. They don't sufficiently value what their peers have said. The tutor, being closer in kind to a teacher, appears to offer the kind of sustained encouragement that is needed by some faltering writers. In writing center publications such as the *Writing*

Center Journal and the *Writing Lab Newsletter*, articles appear regularly testifying to the remarkable progress tutors notice when they help writers see that their writing has merit and that the tutors are truly interested readers who are attending to the ideas being expressed.

Students come to tutorials with other types of concerns as well. A common one is the need for help in overcoming some observed problem in the student's writing. Students may know or have been told that, for example, they have problems with organizing a paper or with sentence construction. If the problem hasn't yet been identified, they have an uneasy feeling that something is weak, but they don't know what. A common opening gambit that I hear in tutorials is from the student who sits down, drops a paper on the table, and sighs, "Could you look at my paper and tell me what's wrong." Untrained responders (and new tutors-in-training) usually take this as a request to spot some error or weakness in the paper, the assumption being that if they can name it or identify it, their work is accomplished. But real diagnostic work is far more complex than that, and the one-to-one format is a particularly effective setting in which to work with the writer and look below the surface. A tutor might ask the writer to describe how the paper was composed or why something was written as it was. What the tutor is listening for is some clue to real, underlying problems. Often that leads to a better idea of what needs to be learned. In short, a tutor learns to look for real causes, not obvious surface features, as is evident in the following excerpt from a tutorial:

tutor: Would you please read this sentence out loud? Then we can both hear it.

student: "It is upon the responsibility of the residence hall counselor to be what is the defined role."

tutor: Could you tell me what you wanted to say with that sentence?

student: Res hall counselors have their duties defined in the contract they sign. It's their responsibility to perform those duties.

tutor: Great, that's pretty clear to me. Why did you write this sentence that way?

student: Because that's what I'm trying to say.

tutor: Sure, but what you said was so much clearer to me than this sentence in the paper. Did what you said out loud sound better to you?

student: Ya, but this is supposed to be a formal essay.

tutor: Are you trying to sound "formal"?

student: Sort of, maybe more like "educated" would be, you know, so it sounds adult.

Many of the other sentences in that student's paper sounded just as garbled as the one included here. The temptation is to think that the student needed help with sentence construction when, in fact, what the student really needed was some help in learning to rely on his ability to say things clearly. He also needed to see that strangulated syntax is not a mark of "educated" prose. This kind of diagnostic work cannot be done by looking at student papers without the student sitting there to add background and explanation, and this kind of necessary work cannot be done in peer groups. Teachers and tutors trained to look for less-than-obvious causes and to keep looking after simply naming the error are the appropriate people to offer this kind of help to writers.

Having seen so many students make quick progress once real causes were clear, I have become leery of textbooks which treat student writers generically. The standard cause/effect type of explanation assumes that when students make errors in punctuation, they simply need to know the rule. Yet I continue to find that punctuation errors are made for an endless variety of reasons. For example, I've heard students explain that they stuck a comma in a certain place because of the word that followed ("I remember that some teacher told me that `but' always requires a comma before it") or that they omitted a needed comma because "there were already too many commas in the sentence." Until these kinds of misconceptions are brought to light, writers can't make too much headway when presented with rules. Similarly, problems with organization can stem from ineffective writing processes, and terse and impersonal expressive essays can be the result not of inadequate invention strategies but of an inadequate sense of what expressive writing is supposed to be. Writers need one-to-one conversations with helpers who can do some useful diagnostic work.

Yet another concern of writers is learning about the writing processes discussed in class and in textbooks. We can read endlessly in seemingly helpful texts about ways to generate material—such as asking questions, brainstorming, cubing, freewriting, and other helpful invention strategies—but that does not mean that all students can then go on to try out these strategies. When I first decided that I was going to learn how to cope with doing page-layout for desktop publishing on a computer, I read and re-read manuals. I even attended workshops, but when I sat down in front of my otherwise friendly little Macintosh, I bogged down. I just wasn't getting the hang of it even though I could already recite from memory the steps I should be taking. I needed a helper willing to sit with me—prompting me, answering questions, or demonstrating what should be going on. It is relatively easy to note the similarities when sitting with students who are attempting to fill out complex planning sheets for their classes or who are trying to organize a long research paper or who are tackling a revision. Going through these and other processes with a skilled helper can help to launch an otherwise stymied writer. This is not an activity for peer groups, and it is not an activity for classrooms, but it is a very appropriate way to spend one-to-one time with writers who aren't proceeding as smoothly as they would like on their own. Even tutorial discussion about a topic is a way for students to feel what is involved in planning.

Unlike peer groups where everyone in the group is participating for his or her own benefit in addition to the benefit of the writer whose draft is the center of attention, the emphasis in the tutorial is on one person, the writer. Tutors gain a great deal from their tutoring, but the primary rationale for being hired and trained is not the benefit they will derive. They are there to focus on the student's concerns, and while tutors share some goals with peer responders, they have other goals that are not appropriate for group work. They are there to answer questions or, preferably, to help writers find their own answers; they are there to diagnose what is really needed; they are there to guide writers through the processes we say they should be learning; and they are there to support and encourage the writer. Tutors have other goals as well, but the emphasis here is on the differences between group work collaboration and one-to-one collaboration. We should not overlook group work in the writing classroom, but we should also not think that this constitutes all the collaboration writers need. Tutorials are essential parts of writing programs.

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Children Connect Reading and Writing

Linda Gurosky

Linda Gurosky is a second grade teacher at Vestavia Hills Elementary West in Vestavia Hills, Alabama. She also teaches part time for the School of Education at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. This article contains highlights from her presentation made at the Gulf Coast Conference on the Teaching of Writing in June 1989, entitled "Reading and Writing in the Land of Opposites."

Six years ago I walked into a second grade classroom for the first time as a teacher. The year before, while in graduate school, I had written a research paper on a new idea promoted by Donald Graves called writer's workshop. Armed with this small bit of knowledge about how kids could become writers in the truest sense of the word, I began teaching, and writing workshop became a daily activity for my class. My students selected their own topics for writing and wrote brief personal narratives, which they enjoyed sharing. My students and I were pleased with this new approach to writing. This is, we were pleased until one day, following the reading of the Caldecott winner *May I Bring A Friend?*, Justin wrote a story very similar to Beatrice Schenk De Regniers's book. I was shocked that one of my students had committed plagiarism. I quickly explained to Justin that the idea had already been used and that he might want to write something else. Justin held on to his story and simply explained that his was different. Although I didn't realize it at that time, Justin had, on his own, made a connection between reading and writing and had constructed a story using an award-winning author as his model.

Thanks to Justin, I now encourage children to use literature as a springboard for their own writing. When I read to them or conference with them about their reading, we talk about the author's style and note how the author describes the setting and the characters. In this article I will share examples of how my students' writing is influenced by literature, showing how they often incorporate characterization, point of view, theme, and style into their own writing after we have discussed how other authors develop these elements.

The Pain and the Great One by Judy Blume is a story in two parts. The first is written from the older sibling's perspective and describes the younger brother as a "pain." In the second part of the story the little brother voices his anguish in having an older sister who thinks she is "the great one." Because almost every child (except onlys) can identify with one of the characters in this story, I, after reading the book aloud to the class, discuss point of view, perspective, and the use of a particular style to effectively tell a story. Mary Beth picked up on the language and style of *The Pain and the Great One* and wrote her own version:

The Biggest Pain I Had Ever Met

> One day my mom had a baby. He was named Johnny. First I thought [he was] cute. Now since he is three he is a big P.A.I.N. He is a pain!!!!! One day I had my doll in my hand, and the pain grabbed it away. And I said, "Johnny, give that back to me!!!!" And then he bit me. "Ouch, ouch!!!!" And then my mom came in. And she got mad at me! Why does my mom always get mad at me when it's the pain's fault!!!!

Miss Nelson is Missing by Harry Allard is the story of a classroom of children who have to face the consequences of their actions when their regular teacher disappears and a mean teacher takes over the class. This story offered many opportunities for connecting reading and writing in our class. Laura's version, called "Mrs. Gurosky is Missing" follows:

> One day Mrs. Gurosky was not at school. Julie and Laura and Hayley and Meredith were doing cartwheels. Brent Mc. was throwing paper airplanes until a lady with black hair and a black dress came in. And she said, "My name is Miss Snap!" After school Meredith and Laura and Julie went looking for Mrs. Gurosky. When they were almost to Mrs. Gurosky's house, there was Miss Snap. They jumped behind the bushes. The next day Mrs. Gurosky came back. She said, "Hello 2A. How was yesterday?" And they told her.

Quite a few students twisted the theme of *Miss Nelson is Missing* from the good teacher-bad children plot to one of good children-bad teacher. Read how Christina develops a story using this format.

Mrs. Gurosky Goes Wacky!

> One day 2A went in the classroom. Mrs. Gurosky said, "CLASS, IT'S TIME TO MAKE PAPER AIRPLANES!" 2A went to the door. Hayley said, "Mrs. Gurosky is going bananas!" Dwayne said, "Help, help!" Julie said, "Now Dwayne is going bananas!" Courtney said, "Dwayne, be quiet!" "Mrs. Gurosky looks funny! Very funny!" said Stacey. "Come on class!" said Mrs. Gurosky. "It's time to have a WATER FIGHT!"

Part Two Mrs. Gurosky is Wackier!

> The next day 2A came in very quietly. Then Mrs. Gurosky said, "CLASS, IT'S TIME TO HAVE A PAPER BALL FIGHT!!!!" Then Mrs. Gurosky got a huge piece of paper and cut it in pieces. Then Mrs. Gurosky said, "Class, it's all ready!" Mrs. Gurosky got a piece of paper and threw it at Danny! Julie said, "Blake, here I come!" The paper ball hit Blake's stomach! Blake thought Dwayne threw it so he threw it back! Blake said, "Dwayne, I'm going to get you!" Dwayne ducked. It went down Lee's shirt! Then Laura charged at Mrs. Gurosky and it, it . . . Hit Elizabeth in the head! Mrs. Gurosky threw a paper ball at Hayley! Hayley ducked. It flew and hit Stacey in the back of the head!

Part Three Is Mrs. Gurosky O.K.?

The next day 2A came in. "Mrs. Gurosky," said Courtney, "You're fine!" Mrs. Gurosky said, "I went to the doctor and he told me to buy a special kind of medicine!" "THE END" said Mrs. Gurosky.

Soon almost every child in 2A (that's what we're called in our school) was writing some kind of 2A adventure story. Our class traveled to Africa and Australia in one story and almost destroyed the zoo in another. And all because we read *Miss Nelson is Missing*.

Another example showing how second graders connect reading to writing happened near the end of school. The last "chapter" book for the year was to be *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis. Before beginning chapter 1, I read Lewis's dedication to Lucy and then the letter he wrote to her that's printed in the front of the book. A couple of weeks later Daniel was sharing a story he'd written. He dedicated it to me (that's why I teach second grade) and then began to read this letter:

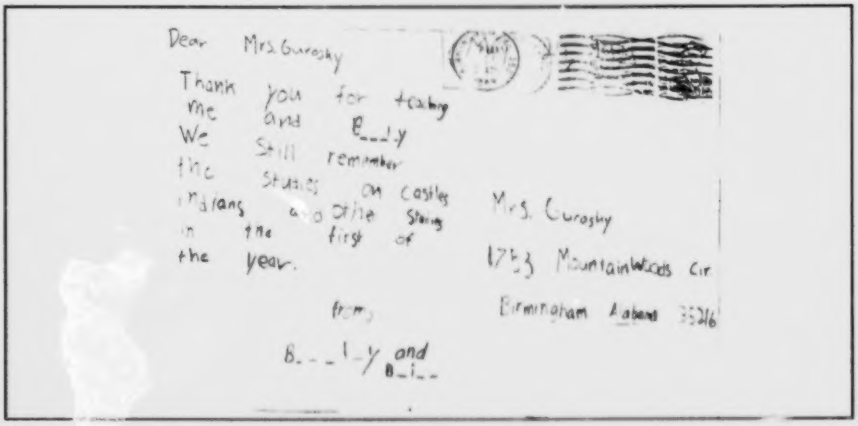
Dear Mrs. Gurosky,

I dedicated this to you because you are the best teacher that I have had in my life. You are nice and a good teacher.

From Daniel

Before I could comment, one student said, "Daniel, that's just like the letter to Lucy." He smiled his slow smile and replied, "I know. That's where I got the idea."

Sometimes I purposely choose a story to initiate a writing activity. Because I wanted our class to write and mail postcards, I read *Stringbean's Trip to the Shining Sea* by Vera B. Williams and Jennifer Williams. We not only enjoyed the story line but also noted the form used when writing postcards (where to write messages, where to write the address, etc.) and busily created postcards from index cards and mailed them. Was I surprised to go to my mailbox and find a postcard to me from two of the second graders! The postcard is shown below. Please note how the students had used one of Stringbean's ways of signing his name in their postcard.



Dear Mrs. Gurosky

Thank you for teaching
me and B___y
We still remember
the stories on castles
indians and othe stories
in the first of
the year.

from

B___l_y and B_i__

Mrs. Gurosky
1753 MountainWoods Cir
Birmingham Alabama 35216

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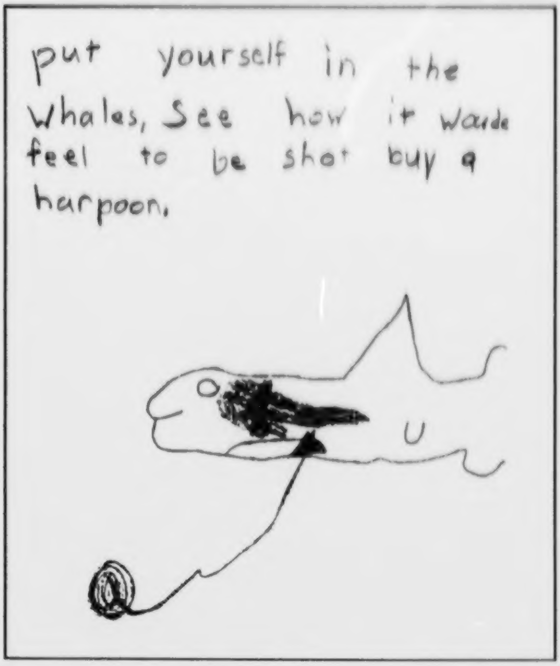
Early last fall we had a unit study on whales. Consequently, whales cropped up in stories all year long. Hayley wrote a scorching attack on anyone who would harm whales and ended it with the drawing and comments shown below.

After I read *Charlotte's Web* aloud to the class, Meredith wrote "Save Animals."


put yourself in the
Whales, See how it Waude
feel to be shot buy a
harpoon.

Save Animals

> You know what I wish? I wish that meat could be a vegetable so that people wouldn't have to kill animals because I feel sorry for them. And I wish that a lion or tiger or other animals did not have to kill other animals. But they have to live.

I could hear the voice of E.B. White as he explains so matter-of-factly how Charlotte must eat to stay alive when Meredith reminds the reader that, although the ideal may be to have no animals kill each other, animals must survive too. She was certainly affected by White's explanation.

While I continue to observe children as they connect reading and writing, I must remain aware of the form, purpose, and content of the books I choose to read aloud because literature is such a powerful model for writing. One of my students wrote that "Quietness is more precious than gold. It passes a few times, then moves away." I would like to model her writing in closing: "A child is more precious than gold. She lingers a while and then moves away. May the child lingering in my classroom have something to take away when she leaves."

Multilingual Book Corners: Melting Languages and Cultures

Sandra F. Cooper

Willie Mae Crews

Sandra F. Cooper currently supervises reading and language arts instruction in the middle schools of the Birmingham Public Schools. Her background includes an undergraduate education at Birmingham Southern College and graduate degrees from the University of Alabama at Birmingham and from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, respectively. Her teaching and supervisory experiences have been at the elementary, middle school, and university levels in Alabama and in Arkansas.

Willie Mae Crews supervises English teachers and works with foreign language teachers at the secondary level in Birmingham Public Schools. She also serves on the ACTE Executive Board and the CEE Commission on the States for NCTE and acts as consultant on the Commission on Supervision and Curriculum Development in English Language Arts for NCTE.

As we approach the twenty-first century, the number of students from non-English backgrounds is dramatically increasing in our public schools. Our past experience with trying to melt diverse languages and cultures into a lumpless liquid has left us with a few lumps of our own. We now know that different languages and cultures need not be strained from our country and, as a matter of fact, that they add flavor to it just as mixed vegetables enhance the flavor of a good stock for a soup. This article has three purposes: 1) to establish the need for wider exposure of students to other languages and cultures, 2) to describe various formats of multilingual literature, and 3) to offer a list of multilingual activities for classroom use.

A Melting Pot Update

The study of foreign languages has been declining in public schools since 1910. Even now, foreign language departments are being eliminated in secondary and post-secondary institutions. At the elementary level, some schools currently offer foreign language classes as enrichment or elective classes, but foreign language study at this level is still very limited. The National Education Association has recognized the need for the monolingual majority of American teachers and students to experience and understand a multilingual world where the importance of English is lessening. Most internationals are able to communicate in at least two languages other than their own.

Sara E. Melendez, discusses the current status of foreign languages spoken around the world:

> More than 2,700 separate languages are spoken in the world today. Some are spoken only by a few hundred or a few thousand people in remote areas. But there are 14 world languages that have at least 50 million speakers each. Chinese has more speakers than any other language—over 1 billion. The next most used languages are English, Hindustani (spoken in northern India), Russian, Spanish, Japanese, and German. It is alarming how few Americans speak any of these languages other than their own. . . . [T]he United States continues to be the most monolingual of all the developed countries. (70)

The economic power of a nation influences whether other countries learn to speak its language. As the United States finds its niche among debtor nations, the more economically strapping nations like Japan are building international markets for their languages. How many Americans speak the Japanese language or even are familiar with Japanese culture?

Here at home, we have a microcosm of the world in our nation and in our public schools. We are a nation of immigrants—and so go our schools. Although most school children speak English, some do not. Those who have learned English over generations still, in many cases, have held on to their cultural traditions in whole or in part. More importantly, the numbers of immigrants and their impact in public schools are expected to increase in the twenty-first century. According to Lloyd Shearer, "no one knows exactly how many immigrants enter the country each year. The number has been estimated at more than 1 million for both legal and illegal entrants . . ." (9). Shearer further comments that, "if immigration continues at 1 million per year, it will increase the number of our children aged 5-19 . . ." (9). Shearer's information suggests that the problems of bilingual and multicultural education will become magnified through the increase in the overall number of students who will need to learn to tolerate each other's differences before being taught the curriculum. A classroom in which multilingual literature plays a significant role is a good place to begin the exposure of students to their languages and cultures.

Multilingual Book Corners

The initial thought of using literature printed in a non-English language can be uncomfortable for many students and teachers. However, a multilingual book corner in a classroom need not contain only literature printed in non-English. Materials printed in all English or any combination of non-English and English can be useful. For instance, much children's literature written in English is about languages and cultures throughout the United States and the world. *Baboushka and the Three Kings* by Ruth Robbins, *Shen of the Sea* by Arthur Bowie Chrisman, *Young Fu of the Upper Yangtze* by Elizabeth Lewis, *And Now Miguel* by Joseph Krumgold, *I Juan de Pareja* by Elizabeth Borton de Trevino, *Crow Boy* by Taro Yashima, and *When Shlemiel Went to Warsaw and Other Stories* by Isaac Bashevis Singer—all written in English—

discuss cultures outside of the English-speaking mainstream.

From "all English" literature, the next move should be to literature that is printed in English but also includes non-English words or expressions. Books and other literature that contain non-English words or expressions may rely upon the contextual use of non-English to convey meaning. Vocabulary or glossary sections also sometimes are used to make the information clearer to the reader. Pronunciation aids such as phonetic respellings, syllabication, and stress marks may be provided for the same purpose. The number and frequency of non-English words and expressions seem to be less related to the age of the intended audience than to the purpose for which the book was written and the interests of the readers. Pictures are used to establish similarities and differences in languages and cultures, especially in ABC books and picture dictionaries, as well as to capture the interest of younger children. Examples of books that contain non-English words or expressions are *Mummies Made in Egypt* by Aliki, *The Sign of the Beaver* by Elizabeth George Speare, *The Nez Perce* by Alice Osinski, *Julie of the Wolves* by Jean Craighead George, *Jambo Means Hello* by Muriel Feelings, *Anansi the Spider* by Gerald McDermott, *A Friendly ABC French-English Alphabet* by Bente Hamann, and *A Child's Picture Dictionary* by Dennis Sheheen.

A third type of literature that would be useful in a multilingual book corner has both an all-English text and a complete translation of the text under the same cover. Translated literature is available at all age and interest levels. Some books have the English text printed first followed by the non-English translation, for example, *Leo el Capullo Tardio/Leo the Late Bloomer*, *José el Gran Ayudante/Herman the Helper*, and *Milton el Madrugador/Milton the Early Riser*, by Robert Kraus. The English translation also may appear at the end of the book, as is the case with *Huit Enfantes Et Un Bebe/Eight Children and One Baby*, by Leonore Klein and with *Le Vilain Chat/The Mischievous Cat* by Denise Et Alain Trez.

Other formats combine English and non-English on the same page, with one language printed at the top of the page and the other printed at the bottom, with one language printed on the left and the other printed on the right of the page, with non-English and English language integration on the same page, or with various other translation placements. These formats appear in *A Little Donkey/Un Petit Ane* by Matias, *The Elephant and His Secret/El Elefante y Su Secreto* by Doris Dana and translated by Gabriela Mistral, *The Snow and the Sun/La Nieve y el Sol* by Antonio Frasconi, *The Little Red Hen/La Pequeña Galina Roja* by Herb Williams, *The Tiger/El Tigre* by Letty Williams and Herb Williams, *Kee's Home—A Beginning Navajo-English Reader* by Geraldine Hall, and *Chinese for Beginners* by Diane Wolff.

For the student who has at least a reading knowledge of a non-English language, non-English literature without accompanying translation is available. Although literature that has no significant amount of translated text assumes that the reader has a basic knowledge of the language, it may contain glossaries or vocabulary sections. For example, *Le Petit Tambour Rouge/The Little Red Drum* by Eunice Smith, *Qué se Dice, Niño?/What Do You Say, Kid?* by Sesyle Joslin, and *Pedro el Angel de la Calle Olvera/Peter the Angle of Olvera*

Street by Leo Politi, all have glossaries or vocabulary lists.

Prior exposure to the English version of non-English text makes the text less difficult for the English monolingual. The meanings of unfamiliar non-English expressions can be determined through the context of familiar English terms and cognates. Many popular children's books printed in English have non-English versions, such as *Alice's Abenteur in Wunderland/Alice's Adventure in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll, written in German; *Huckleberry Finn's Fahrten Und Abenteur/The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain, written in German; *L'Arbe au Grand Coeur/The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein, written in French; *Le Robinson Suiss/The Swiss Family Robinson* by Johann Wyss, written in French; *Le Avventure Di Pinocchio/The Adventures of Pinocchio* by Carlo Collodi, written in Italian; *Danielito y el Dinosauro/Daniel and the Dinosaur* by Syd Hoff, written in Spanish; *El Bebé de los Osos Berenstain/The Berenstain's Baby* by Stan Berenstain, written in Spanish; *Personne N'ecoute André/Nobody Listens to Andrew* by Elizabeth Guilfoile, written in French; *La Vaca Curiosa/The Curious Cow* by Esther Meeks, written in Spanish; *Winnie Ille Pu/Winnie the Pooh* by A. A. Milne, written in Latin; *Silvestre y la Pedrita Magica/Silvester and the Magic Pebble* by William Steig, written in Spanish; and *Hans og Grete/Hansel and Gretel* by Jacob Grimm, written in Norwegian.

One last type of multilingual, multicultural literature that would add to the appeal and effectiveness of a multilingual book corner is multiple language translations of a single selection. Multiple translations of a specific selection are not as plentiful as the other types of literature mentioned. In this kind of literature, all of the translations are under the same cover but may be organized in various sequences. English is not always the first translation and even may not be present at all in some publications. However, English is usually included among the languages that appear in the text. This class of literature would be represented by books like *See and Say: A Picture Book in Four Languages* by Antonio Frasconi, written in English, Italian, French, and Spanish; *In School* by Esther Hautzig, written in Russian, Spanish, and French; *In the Park: An Excursion in Four Languages*, also by Hautzig, written in Russian, Spanish, English, and French; and *Teaser and the Firecat* by Cat Stevens, written in French, English, and Spanish.

Listings of classic and contemporary multicultural, multilingual children's literature can be found in indexes to children's literature, in library card catalogs, in commercial sources from textbook and tradebook publishers and distributors, in professional library and language arts journals, and in publications by writers and editors of professional and juvenile children's literature. The cultural, thematic, age, interest, and readability classifications of the literature can also be obtained from many such listings. The books may be checked out of a library, bought, or borrowed to fill a multilingual reading area of the classroom. Along with literature, multilingual book corners also should contain a variety of activities that capture students' interest and that make exposure to other languages and cultures enjoyable.

Multilingual Activities

The activities in the multilingual area of the classroom should appeal to all students, regardless of their experiences with a non-English language. Some of these activities are listed below. Teachers may add as many other ideas to the list as their creativity allows.

1. Use number and counting activities such as counting rhymes, numeral matching, and naming and matching money denominations.

2. Introduce literature through reading aloud to students.

3. Allow students to share their own languages and cultures through listening, speaking, reading, writing, art, and music.

4. Invite multilingual parents and resource people to talk about their own languages and cultures, to present oral and written literature, and to share songs, dances, and artifacts.

5. Allow students to construct art and crafts that represent various cultures.

6. Use shared greetings and ways of honoring relatives and friends in other cultures. Students may even send each other birthday and greeting cards in different languages.

7. Provide multilingual lists of names and of commonly used objects and places.

8. Allow students to make multilingual translations of commercial literature written by the class. For example, they might produce big books, poetry, plays, stories, or songs.

9. Compile a class recipe book of foods from many cultures.

10. Allow students to prepare class murals, mobiles, banners, quilts (paper or fabric) with multicultural decorations and multilingual expressions.

11. Allow students to share their favorite multicultural or non-English literature with their classmates in whole class, cooperative learning group, or individual presentations.

12. Provide multicultural or multilingual video and audio tapes for use with writing and speaking exercises and for enjoyment.

13. Allow students to make their own audio and video tapes.

14. Provide access to non-English dictionaries that are commercially published and allow students to construct their own dictionaries and glossaries.

15. Encourage students to prepare overhead transparencies for art and other presentations of multilingual literature.

The following activity may be used to help students write septain poetry in a non-English language. Septain poetry is most appropriate for students in the middle grades or higher because of its structure. If the first and last lines are written before lines 2-6, the transition between the two opposite nouns (lines 1 and 7) may be easier. English and non-English words may be combined as a variation of the activity. Multilingual books with glossaries and multilingual dictionaries may greatly assist students with this exercise.

SEPTAIN POETRY

Line 1	___	(Noun/Topic)
Line 2	___ ___	(Two words describing Line 1)
Line 3	___ ___ ___	(Three characteristics or verbs describing Line 1)
Line 4	___ ___ ___ ___	(Transitional line)
Line 5	___ ___ ___	(Three characteristics or verbs describing Line 7)
Line 6	___ ___	(Two words describing Line 7)
Line 7	___	(One noun that is the opposite of Line 1)

Example:

Spanish

El toro
feroz, fuerte
observando, excuchando, corriendo
el animal, el rebelde, el hombre, el deportista
pensando, moviendo, luchando
brutal, cruel
El matador

English

Bull
ferocious, strong
observing, listening, running
animal, rebel, man, sportsman
thinking, moving, fighting
brutal, cruel
Matador

Preparation of students for a multilingual, multicultural twenty-first century has to begin in the twentieth century. No teacher is too monolingual nor is any student too young to taste the flavor of different languages and cultures.

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Peggy Swoger featured on Disney Channel

Peggy Swoger, a teacher at Mountain Brook Junior High and president of the ACTE, will be featured on "Disney Channel Salutes the American Teacher." One of only 30 teachers selected from across the United States, Peggy was nominated by the NCTE to receive this recognition. Peggy describes her classroom in this excerpt from the profile she wrote for the Disney Channel:

> My classroom may best be described as a student-centered, interactive one in which the students engage in daily writing. They select their own subjects for writing and establish their own agenda during workshop time. This means that the students assign themselves classwork and homework; that they work at their own pace; that they engage their peers as both audience and critics for their work; and that they work under the careful supervision of their coach—me.
>
> My new job as coach is a very different one from my old job as a traditional grammar/literature teacher. However, I still do teach grammar in the context of writing, where the students can see the usefulness of commas and participles. The students' own writing is our textbook, which means that I am constantly challenged to deal with complex language problems every day. However, I insist that the students deal with getting ideas down in draft form and then we will work on the language problems during the editing state.

Writing to Learn at "The Write School"

Mary Beth Culp

Deborah Hobbs

Mary Beth Culp is a professor of English Education in the Department of Secondary Education at the University of South Alabama. She is a graduate of Florida State University and has been actively involved in NCTE at the state, regional, and national levels. Her published work includes Thematic Units in Teaching English and the Humanities *and* Me? Teach Reading?

Until recently, Deborah Hobbs was coordinator of Talents Unlimited and writing specialist for Mobile County Schools. A graduate of the University of Nebraska, she is a former secondary school teacher and part-time instructor at the University of South Alabama. She currently lives in Logan, Utah.

The writing across the curriculum movement in American schools is one of the most dramatic developments in recent educational history. Writing as a way of learning, not merely of telling what you have learned, is an approach that has impressed teachers in many content areas and at various levels with its simplicity and usefulness. James Britton and his colleagues, Janet Emig, and Donald Graves paved the way for such an approach with their research on the composing process. This research helped teachers to look at writing as a unique mode of learning which helps students not only to clarify their thoughts, but actually to discover what they know as they are expressing themselves in writing.

The concept of writing to learn across the curriculum is based on the idea, simply stated, that productive use of language, especially writing, is "a valuable tool for learning for all students in all subjects at all ages" (Mayher et al 78). When we write a report of what we observe in a science experiment or when we synthesize material gathered from many sources for a social studies report, the process of putting our words on paper can be an integral part of learning the content of these subjects. It is essential, however, that the writing not be mere copying of a teacher's or an author's words or writing of the fill-in-the-blanks variety. It is the process of putting our ideas, thoughts, questions, observations, feelings, and conclusions in our own words that makes writing a learning process.

This view of the writing and learning relationship is a non-traditional one, emphasizing the process involved in writing rather than the product. Writing becomes a means to an end; that end is not telling what we know but discovering what we know in the process of writing it down. Thus, writing becomes a way of knowing rather than a way of telling (McCrimmon 115).

Writing as a way of knowing, or a means of learning, includes list making, note taking, and journal writing as well as more formal types of writing. These methods lend themselves to active learning in all content areas, and in the process of engaging in various kinds of writing to learn, we become more adept at writing to tell what we know. That is, the more we use writing in real learning contexts, the more proficient we become in tapping our natural language resources.

Fran Lehr notes the impressive body of research which supports the existence of a strong interrelationship among the language skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening (958). However, this relationship has not always been consciously extended to or developed in the teaching and learning of subjects other than language arts. Betty Wagner notes that language arts integration can be considered in three different ways (557). The first and most common understanding of integration is learning each of the language arts in terms of the others; the second recognizes that each language mode is an integrated whole rather than a set of isolated components; and the third is based on the idea that integration may involve the development of language while learning other content areas. In the writing across the curriculum model, writing to learn and learning to write evolve naturally from the curriculum. They are reciprocal, meaning-making activities.

This article describes a writing across the curriculum program developed in a public elementary school in Mobile, Alabama, with a small grant from private industry. Mary B. Austin School, with an enrollment of 452 students, became The Write School in a year-long program involving students, faculty, administrators, and the community in using writing as a catalyst for learning across the curriculum.

The Plan

The program was developed in a two-week inservice seminar immediately before school started in the fall and at quarterly meetings during the year. The school system's skill-based curriculum, with its competency tests, was an integral part of the planning.

The first week was spent in exploring process theory. Each stage of the process (pre-writing, writing, and re-writing) was discussed, but most of the time was spent on pre-writing and invention strategies such as brainstorming, clustering (Rico 28-49), free writing (Elbow 13-19), and looping (Elbow 59-77). Pre-writing was defined as everything that takes place before the first draft. According to Donald Murray, the pre-writing or discovery stage of writing may take as much as 85 percent of the writer's time (15). Accordingly, a great deal of discussion was devoted to this often neglected stage in the writing process, which Peter Elbow has termed "priming the pump"(78-93). Although the stages of the writing process were considered separately, it was continuously emphasized that they are in fact overlapping and recursive.

The second week of the seminar was spent in making lessons for including writing in every part of the curriculum. The principal, speech therapist, special education teacher, and media specialist participated in both weeks' activities. As a long-range goal the group planned a writing fair to be held at the end of the year to highlight students' work.

Following is a summary of the experience of three individual teachers—one kindergarten, one third grade, and one fifth grade—during that year. Each of the teachers adapted the writing to learn concept to her own students and the content they were expected to learn.

Writing to Learn in Kindergarten

Judy Kent

Our writing began in September with every child keeping a journal. At this point most of the children either scribbled or drew pictures of something they liked. After two weeks of daily journal writing, we began selecting a word of the day from the Dolch list, beginning with the simplest words. The students recorded the word in their journals and drew a picture relating to it. The collection of words was displayed on a pocket chart and grew daily as the children's vocabulary expanded. By November many students were asking how to spell additional words in order to further describe the pictures in their journals. Later we progressed to a sentence of the day. Not only did the children build vocabulary, they also learned sentence structure and punctuation. By using the word cards, students were able to manipulate the words, with the help of classmates, until they created a complete sentence. This sentence, along with appropriate pictures, was recorded in the journal. By the end of the year many students were writing pages of sentences dealing with an experience or topic of relevance.

Other writing techniques were employed to teach skills outlined in the system curriculum manual. For example, prior to a unit on farm animals, the children clustered on the word *farm*. This activity gave them the opportunity to display their knowledge of the farm, and it created interest in the upcoming unit. We visited a farm at the end of our unit study and then repeated the clustering activity. It was thrilling for the students to see in writing how much they had grown in their knowledge of the subject.

In math we wrote rhymes to help us remember the correct formation of numerals. This writing aided students in the handwriting lesson and at the same time was fun. All year I heard the students repeating the rhymes as they formed their numerals.

Writing was so contagious that it transferred to almost every activity. Once when we were drawing pictures to send to a student who was ill, I found many students were writing not only words on their pages but also messages and asking other students for help with sentence structure.

The highlight of our year was the publication of the students' books, a project in which they had the opportunity to put into practice all the skills they had learned throughout the year. The project involved these steps:

1. The students dictated the story, which I recorded verbatim. Then I read the story back to them as they looked on. If they were satisfied with it, we moved to the next step; if not, they were given the opportunity to think about the story for a few days until they were ready to record again.

2. The story was printed on sentence strips. The children then wrote their stories on lined paper using the sentence strips as a model and framing each word individually as they went. Children who were not developmentally ready to print on lined paper used the primary typewriter, with the help of fifth-grade writing partners.

3. The students learned to read their stories, with the assistance of volunteer parents and fifth graders.

4. The stories were laid out and published. The students organized the layout of their own story, making decisions about the placement of words and pictures on the page, the size of the book, and the color or pattern of the cover. A first copy was printed or typed by the student and bound. A second copy of the same book was typed by an adult and illustrated by the student. The second copy was then included in the classroom library for checkout by other students.

Partly as a result of making these books, the students were highly motivated to read. No longer were books awe-inspiring or threatening. The children were amazed that they could write books that other people wanted to read. They loved to show visitors to our classroom the results of their work. Never were so many parents and students (and teachers) excited by the children's ability to read.

The following excerpts from the students' writing sum up our experience:

Writing means
  a lot of hard work that is fun
  being happy
  finally being able to write a
    sentence

Writing helps you
  tell about what you've learned
  learn by learning new words every
    day
  learn about your feelings
  learn about yourself by thinking
    and writing in your journal

Writing makes me feel
  surprised. I feel surprised when I
    can write so good.
  really great!

Writing to Learn in the Third Grade

Marty Beaird

"The thing that I liked most about writing was reading my stories and feeling proud of them. I sure worked hard writing and editing."

"I enjoyed writing our books because you know now that you're an author."

"I like clustering because you can get your feelings out and feel better about them."

These thoughts were expressed by my third graders at the end of an exciting year of using writing as a tool for learning.

We began our year by free writing. Initially, I found that some students were apprehensive about writing. Their immediate response was, "I can't think of anything to write." But after several experiences with free writing, the class members became more confident about their ability to express themselves by jotting down words, phrases, and then complete sentences.

Brainstorming became a useful tool during the year for introducing units, stimulating interest in a new subject, and giving me an idea about how much information the students had acquired about a particular subject.

Clustering was introduced as a way to begin with one thought and branch into many different areas. The students loved the format used in clustering, and they were amazed that after a clustering activity they had a variety of ideas from which to choose a topic for writing.

Journal writing was a part of our activities every day. Journals were private, but some children wanted to share their thoughts with friends. As one student wrote: "I liked writing in my journal because when you grow up and look back you can see how you felt." Another student wrote: "The enjoyment of letting your mind go free is just great."

After approximately six months of writing, our class began the editing process. We used group editing initially, with the class divided into groups of four. We reviewed the editing check points, with dictionaries and resource books available. Two points were stressed: we were editing to become better writers, and we could do so without hurting anyone's feelings.

Soon the students realized that it was best to read their stories aloud for content and organization; then partners read the work together, working on surface errors. The students needed very little guidance on what to do in the editing groups. Many times students would work in pairs and then pass rough drafts around the group for all to see. These small group activities were helpful not only for developing academic skills, but for social and interpersonal relations as well.

As the year went by, group editing or pair editing became a welcome activity. I used afternoon reading time on many days for editing and completing pieces of writing. We often spent three days completing a story, play, or fable.

Perhaps one of the greatest rewards of using the editing process in our classroom was its influence on group work in other areas. The students enjoyed working in pairs or groups recording science experiments or writing word problems in math. One student expressed his thoughts about editing in this way: "Editing meant time to spend together, find mistakes, and not make fun of each other."

Writing to Learn in the Fifth Grade

Patti Hughes

Initially, I was skeptical that I could make the writing program fit into the system guidelines, but I thought writing to learn was worth a try. Although a lot of research backed up the idea, I wasn't sure how to implement this approach. I later realized that writing to learn was merely a way to look at the curriculum. I found that children show you what works as you lead them through the process.

In developing writing activities, I began with curriculum objectives. In science, for example, as we began a unit on plants, we brainstormed in order to get an idea of what the children already knew about the topic, and I tailored my instruction from there. We wrote letters to the U.S. Forestry Service requesting supplemental information, to our city council stating our opinions on the beautification of the city, and a letter to the editor protesting the needless destruction of trees at construction sites. Prior to a test, I had the children write down all the significant facts in a chapter or list the steps in a process or experiment. In this way, I could see what they understood or misunderstood about the material before test times.

In social studies one of our objectives was to locate the 50 states of the United States on the map. I had each child choose a state and compose a business letter to the tourist bureau of that state requesting information. The children used this information to write a friendly letter to their imaginary Grandma Hughes in London, trying to persuade her to visit them in their state over the summer holidays. As the children shared their letters to Grandma, it was quite revealing to see how they had digested the research information to use in the persuasive letter.

Activities and exercises located in language and spelling books are generally of the underline-and-circle variety. The children soon get the pattern and cease to think. How much more interesting to cluster or brainstorm on the topics of proper or common nouns or adjectives! Students can make a list and then create their own exercises.

I believe that any objective in reading is best learned when it is accompanied by a writing activity. To recognize the main idea of a paragraph, the children practiced first in constructing paragraphs and seeing how the sentences of the paragraph fell into the main idea and supporting detail categories. To recognize a simile or comparison, the children first shared an experience, such as exploring popcorn or a marshmallow with their senses, and then creating similes or metaphors about the qualities of each. We later wrote poetry about these topics. This lesson was such a success that the students continued to be aware of the presence of simile. When we read stories, it was sometimes difficult to remember the story line with the children shouting, "I hear a simile."

Music and art, too, lend themselves to writing as a teaching tool. Beyond writing musical lyrics, children wrote about their feelings or responses to a particular piece of music, whether classical or contemporary. They also wrote cause-and-effect sentences describing the feelings that certain instruments and dynamics created in them during specific sections of a movie sound track. They compared and contrasted different qualities of artists' works, examining them and analyzing their styles and subject matter. They wrote letters to artists to ask for advice and wrote reviews of their works. They compared certain artists' styles to their own.

If I were to use only one activity to start a writing program, it would be the journal. In fifth grade, the journals were private, read only by the teacher, and ungraded. I responded to what I read in a positive, conversational manner. We began the year with 10 minutes of journal time, but this quickly became inadequate. Some students even had competitions to see how many pages they could write that day. The students kept their journals at their desks in case they wanted to write in them at another time. Poetry was often begun in the journal. Students felt comfortable revealing things that they would never say to me in person. I read about a hard day, an embarrassing moment, a fight with a best friend. I sympathized or encouraged the children in my written responses, thereby validating their writing and their expression of feelings.

In this approach it is important that the teacher write all activities with the students. If you write as the children do, you will probably create more interesting projects, and you will show the children that writing is a valuable activity. If you get stuck for a word or don't know where to go next in a story, the children love to listen to your attempts as you struggle to express yourself. They can often help and give your writing a vitality it may lack. This experience happened to me as I shared a poem I had written with my class. The students not only helped me finish my poem, but also created the perfect title for it.

Conclusions and Implications

Mary B. Austin School concluded the year with a writing fair, as planned, but it did not cease to be The Write School. The writing across the curriculum program created so much enthusiasm in students, teachers, administrators, parents, and the community that it has continued to be a vital part of the school program without additional funding. During the second and third years, new faculty were introduced to the program concept and curricular strategies during regular faculty and inservice meetings, and several of the faculty have presented inservice programs at other schools. The writing fair is now a regular feature of the school year. In addition, students' written work is displayed in classrooms and hallways throughout the year.

Student performance on both system competency tests and standardized tests is being carefully monitored. In the three years since the program began, students have maintained or exceeded past performance levels on criterion referenced tests developed by the system to measure curriculum objectives at each grade level. On the Stanford Achievement Test, a preliminary analysis indicates that across all grade levels slight gains have been made in national percentile scores. Although a more detailed analysis is planned, these preliminary results have relieved teachers from any anxiety they might have had about student performance on tests and have removed pressure to use a drill approach to learning. The school principal believes that the success of the program is due to several factors:

1. Teachers were heavily involved in planning the program from the beginning. The two-week inservice program just prior to the opening of the school gave them an opportunity to explore the concept in depth, to do some writing themselves, and to make plans which could be immediately implemented. Collaboration with peers was encouraged. Teachers were given leeway to adapt the principles of writing to learn to their own

students while working within curriculum guidelines and have made revisions in the program since that time. New teachers have been assimilated into the program through regular inservice meetings and by being paired with teachers experienced in writing to learn practices and strategies.

2. Publication of student work continues to be highly motivating to the children, teachers, and parents. Writing continues to be displayed everywhere in the school—in the classrooms, the hallways, the library, the cafeteria—throughout the year. The enthusiasm the students feel when they see their own work on display and have it read by others has been a prime force in the development of the program.

3. Writing to learn is easily assimilated into other curricular programs, which are a part of the total school program. These programs include teaching thinking skills. Thus, writing has been seen not as something added on top of other curricular goals, but as a means of achieving those goals.

Faculty from the University of South Alabama have continued their interest in the project, if not their direct involvement. The program has served as a model for other cooperative ventures between the University and local schools and has reaffirmed University faculty's belief in the value of their own writing across the curriculum program. One of Austin's teachers summarized her feelings and those of others involved in the project, this way: "As a result of this experience, I have come to the conclusion that anything worth learning is worth writing about and, if you write it, you're more likely to learn it."

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Thought Logs: The Technique that is "A Natural"

Carrie Luger Slayback

Carrie Luger Slayback is a mentor teacher in the Fountain Valley School District in California, where she has taught since 1966. She has won a number of teaching awards, including the Disneyland Community Services Award, and has received a state grant for her "Literature Alive" program. In 1986, she was Teacher-of-the-Year for her county.

So much is said about educational change, about implementation of new ideas. Maybe that is the problem: *so much is said.* Teachers wishing to stay abreast of current practices hear a lot and read so much more that they may well reach the inertia of overload. This was the case during the first year of my mentorship, which coincided with the initial stages of the California state adoption of a new English/Language Arts framework. I was introduced to so many new ideas and techniques that my file cabinet bulged. One stands out: Gabrielle Rico's thought logs and clustering.

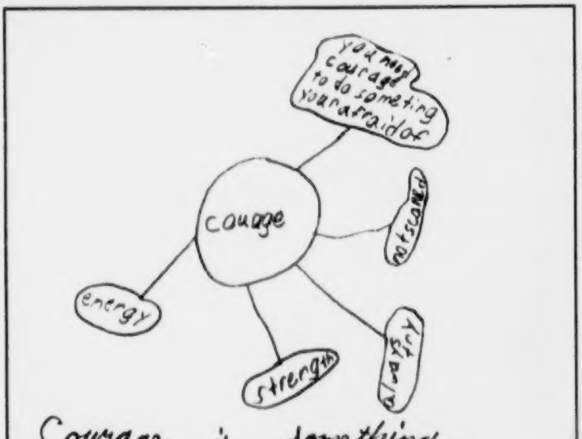
Speaking to the assembled mentors at an October meeting, Rico showed us clusters done by her students. A cluster starts with a circular sweep of the pencil, giving the writer-in-search-of-ideas an empty "O" shape. The writer places a word inside. From this "O" radiates a free flowing series of spokes on the ends of which other circles appear and are filled with other words. The writer is conducting an internal data search which follows the myriad of unexpected arcs, jolts, and turns of the activity of the human brain. The search is uncensored, although an organization soon appears. The organization is a relationship between the middle word and others, a string of words which need to be joined. At this moment, the writer begins to write, the paragraphs of the thought log form, and writer's block is short circuited.

Rico explained that her technique was enhanced by ritual and regularity. So, every morning, first thing, my 4 / 5 grade class "clustered" a word. In the beginning, I chose the word and commented on its relationship to the book we were reading. Most of the clusters included here come from reactions to the book *Ishi*. In this story, a California Indian leaves the land of his ancestors for the busy San Francisco of the 1900s.

We began clustering with the word "courage," because this Indian had amazing courage to leave behind 3000 years of history. After a short discussion, I wrote my cluster and the beginnings of a paragraph on the blackboard. I felt I'd modeled enough, and the students started. Generally, they clustered for two or three minutes developing the idea which would push them to write a paragraph. They wrote for about 10 minutes.

Tommy was an amiable boy who had to be reminded to put his name on his papers and to turn in his papers rather than stuff them in his desk. Tommy was disorganized, but I learned that there was more to Tommy as you can see by his cluster below.

Ken had the most bravado of any boy in my class. I thought he'd try anything. He was dominant in sports, quick to learn, and confident with the girls. The "courage" cluster came right after a school assembly where the candidates for student council spoke. Ken revealed the insecurity under the swagger, as well as the hope, in his cluster shown on next page.



Courage is something you have to get alot of energy to do. And when you try it it's not that scary any more. But if you never try it you will be scared for the rest of your life.

It took me 40 years to learn this.

Tommy, a boy with a happy smile and careless study habits, impressed me with his insight in impromptu writing.

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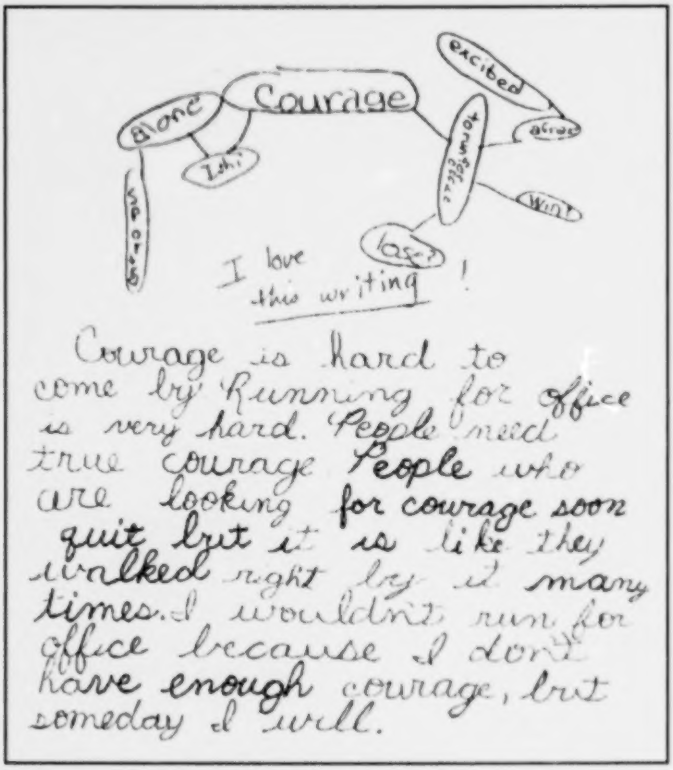
Courage
alone
Ishi
excibed
afraid
run for office
win?
lose?

I love this writing!

Courage is hard to come by Running for office is very hard. People need true courage People who are looking for courage soon quit but it is like they walked right by it many times. I wouldnt run for office because I dont have enough courage, but someday I will.

Ken's self-confident swagger hid some insecurities.

Later we clustered around the word "home." Ishi's small family of Indians climbed to a rocky cave on the side of Mt. Lassen, a dormant volcano. They left the valley where the Yahi Indians had lived for centuries to hide from the Indian hunters who had murdered the rest of their tribe. These valley and meadow Indians made the abandoned bear cave home as they set up traditional drying racks, a "fire pit," and a "women's house."

After my cluster, Kathryn, one of my nine 5th graders, who had grown from the quiet 4th grader of the previous year, one who never took off her coat, to become the leading soccer player and thinker in my 4/5 class, wrote the cluster shown on the next page.

By now we had a short discussion each morning, sometimes in relation to a part of the literature we were reading or sometimes simply to the events of the day. We agreed on a word, but students were free to choose their own if they wished. Students started writing quickly, willingly. I had given up my blackboard cluster. Instead, I sat at my

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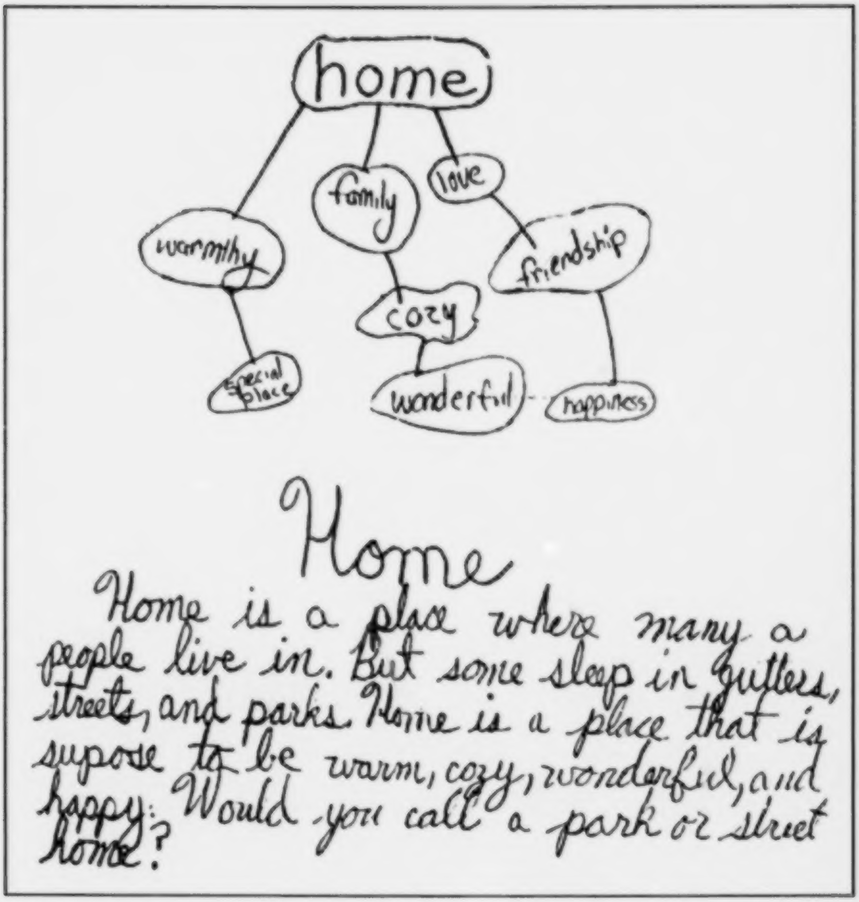
desk writing for a few minutes; then students began raising their hands as they finished. I circulated and wrote comments at the bottom of their paragraphs. They thought through their pencils, and I thought back with my pen.

Since the clustering had been going so well, I decided to risk introducing the difficult word "genocide." We realized, again from reading *Ishi*, that an entire Indian tribe had been systematically ambushed and murdered. I was going to give this a name and discuss its occurrences throughout history. Genocide is a large and terrifying topic, yet I thought my class of 9- and 10-year olds could handle it.


home
family
love
warmthy
friendship
cozy
special place
wonderful
happiness

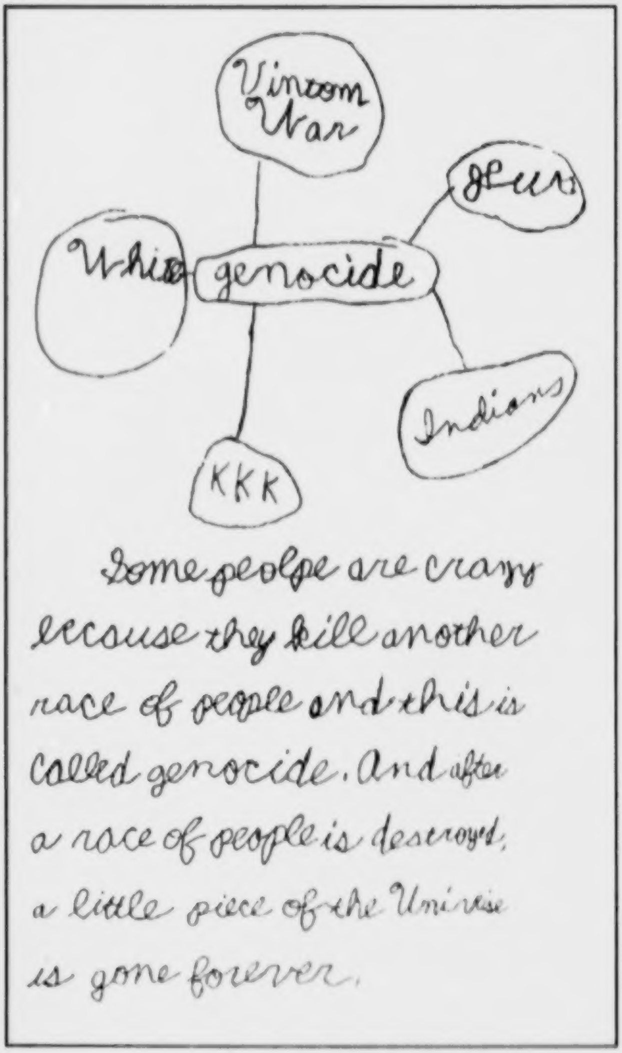
Home

Home is a place where many a people live in. But some sleep in gutters, streets, and parks. Home is a place that is supose to be warm, cozy, wonderful, and happy. Would you call a park or street home?

Kathryn emerged from the 4th grader who hid under her coat to the leading 5th grade thinker and the conscience of our class.

Mark, a 4th grader, was a very small, very pale little boy. He was a heart patient who was a continual source of concern to his mother. His cluster about genocide is shown below. I will always keep his cluster and quote near me. I don't think any writer has ever said it better.

Whatever magic occurs with the setting down of circles and words, whatever connection with the mysterious

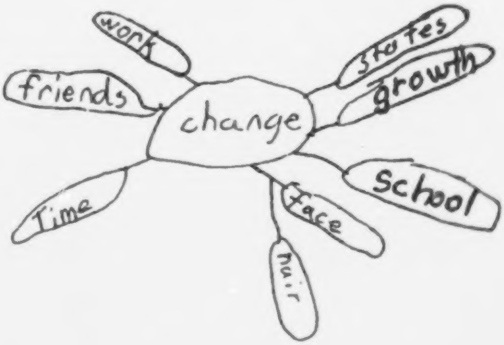


Some peolpe are crazy
because they kill another
race of people and this is
Called genocide. And after
a race of people is destroyd,
a little piece of the Universe
is gone forever.

Mark, whose health problems made him look small and immature, wrote with maturity and intelligence.

electricity of the brain, whatever release it gives the writer whose pencil seems to push along with new found depth and freedom, I will use Rico's thought logs forever for myself and my students. As the students discover their own ideas and reactions, I discover mine, and we join as thinkers. This is the power of the thought log and clustering, an expression and exchange of insight.

I will end with another one of my favorite clusters. This comes from Brandon, a boy who, in years past, had been considered for a full-day remedial class and who neither spoke nor had eye contact with me for weeks in the fall. He became a brave writer and poet, unafraid to reveal his innermost feelings. His "change" cluster, my question, and his answer are shown below.



Changing school is hard because you have to make new friends and you have to learn new things. Your growth will change, your voice might change your friends might change, states will change but not your heart.

This is beautiful as usual. What has caused all this beautiful writing?

The heart

Brandon, last year's candidate for full-day special education classes, became this year's master of prose.

An Interview with Mary Ward Brown

James Thomas

James Thomas is a Graduate Teaching Assistant at Auburn University where he is currently finishing his MA in English. He came to Auburn to study literature after working for several years in the defense contractor industry. His motivation for a career change was ignited by an uncontrollable desire to read and write fiction. He is currently at work on his first novel.

Most people would believe that 60 years old is a little too old for someone to seriously contemplate a writing career, but that is just what Mary Ward Brown has done. The story behind Brown's writing career is unique and, the best part of all, full of love. My original desire to interview Brown was based on her being a Southern writer, but, after learning her story, I soon realized there was much more to learn from her than her Southern background.

Mary Ward Brown graduated from Judson College, a Baptist women's college near her hometown of Hamburg, Alabama, with a degree in English. After graduation she accepted the job of publicity director at the college, and while attending a conference, she met Kirtley Brown, the publicity director for Alabama Polytechnic Institute (now Auburn University), and not long after they were married. She quit her job at Judson and moved to Auburn where they lived for seven years and where she gave birth to her son Kirtley. The family moved to Hamburg when her father died and left her the family farm. During this time she began to write and had a few short stories published, but she soon quit when she found herself torn between writing and taking care of her family. Her love for her family was top priority, and she decided that her life with them was more important than sitting closed up in a room for several hours trying to write fiction.

After her son was grown and her husband had died—25 years after she had stopped writing—Brown decided to try writing again. Although some people might find fault in her decision to give up her writing and take care of her family and farm, she has never regretted her complete devotion to her family. In addition, Brown's love for writing never died. Her writing career reveals the love that every writer must possess in order to seriously pursue writing as a craft. Writers do not make the decision to write fiction as though they are making a decision to be an accountant; writers write because they love to write, regardless of their age and circumstances.

I interviewed Brown in January, 1989, at the Auburn University Hotel and Conference Center, where she had been invited to read one of her stories during the Read Alabama! conference. She has received many such invitations since her first collection of short stories, *Tongues of Flame*, was published in 1986. This collection, which according to *Publishers Weekly* depicts "timeless emotions such as suffering, loss, and joy with a light, sure hand," received the Ernest Hemingway Foundation Award for 1987. She seemed to be sincerely surprised with all of the praise she has received and was happy to answer any questions I had concerning writing. She was polite, kind, warm, and straightforward in her answers, and projected an intense, energetic look with her eyes as she was listening and talking.

Interviewer: Let's start off with the basic questions asked of a writer. What made you want to write? Where did you get the desire to write?

Brown: That would be hard to say. People have written books on the creative instinct and it's just there in some people, much more pronounced in some people than others.

Interviewer: Did you always have the desire to write or to express yourself in some way?

Brown: Yes, as a child I tried to write poems. They were very small poems, and I didn't know what I was doing. I wanted to do something; I just didn't know what. Even all the years I was just keeping house I wanted to make the flowers pretty; I wanted to make the meals nice. I wanted to make a room look good; I wanted it to be comfortable and beautiful with the means I had.

Interviewer: That's an interesting part of your life I would like to explore. You were writing and then you quit for 25 years. Why?

Brown: What happened was that I had a sister-in-law who was writing short stories and having them published for *McCall's* and *Redbook* and all those, and she loaned me some books on narrative technique. That kind of got me off dead center. I would start these stories, I would have these great beginnings and I wouldn't know how to go ahead. I read those books and continued to read fiction, and finally all of these things began to soak in that you needed to know to write narrative. It's just like playing the piano. Unless you know a little bit about harmony or can at least read music, you just can't play. Of course there are people who can play by ear and there are those I believe who can write by ear. Anyway, I finally wrote a story all of the way through and I didn't know what to do with it. I sent that story to someone who advertised as an agent, which is something you are not supposed to do. Anyway, this person wrote me a very complimentary and encouraging letter. Well, it was all a fraud. I mean legitimate agents don't advertise. But it was in the *Atlantic Monthly* and I thought it would be alright. But the main thing is that I had written a story and I began to write more.

Finally, I decided to go to the University of Alabama, which is not far from where we lived and [where] I still [live], and take Hudson Strode's creative writing class. I sent off a couple of stories to the University and they said I couldn't be in Hudson Strode's class, that I had to be in John Craig Stewart's class first. My husband was a wonderful male chauvinist; he didn't really trust my driving to go by myself and was terribly worried when I did go. He decided that he would drive me to Tuscaloosa once a week for me to attend the class. They said I could come once a week. But this almost killed him because he would work all day at the farm and then drive me up to Tuscaloosa at night and wait for me at the library, which was really a good thing for him. He loved a college campus and a college library.

Anyway, what I was getting at was that I could not, in the things that I read, comprehend what "theme" meant. I don't know why I had just a block. I could not understand what was meant by theme. Finally, in that class it dawned on me. I knew that you had to have a theme or your story wouldn't hold together, but I couldn't figure out what was meant by theme. After I understood theme, I could write; I could write a short story. I couldn't verbalize the theme in a sentence, but I knew it had to stay on this little line.

However, nobody that I knew was interested in writing fiction and I lived out there in the country. In fact, nobody that I knew even read fiction. So I read somewhere that you could take a creative writing course through correspondence at the University of North Carolina. So I signed up for that and Charles Edward Eaton, a poet, was my teacher. First, they put me in a regular short story class. I was to study all these short stories and answer questions and write essays. So I said I didn't want to do that; I didn't have time. I just wanted to write short stories and have them criticized. So they let me do that. I would write these stories and send them to Charles Edward Eaton.

He was the one that said you have to try the quarterlies. So I started to send the stories out to the literary quarterlies. He suggested the *University of Kansas Review*, which was very good at the time. So they took one, and then they took another. I started to get stories published in several quarterlies, but I wasn't making any money and we were having a hard time on the farm.

My husband had never lived on a farm, much less run a farm, and we had a fairly good size operation, about 3,000 acres. Here I was upstairs with the room shut trying to write fiction. My husband had given up a good job at Auburn to come over and run the farm that I had inherited. I just couldn't do that. Though for about four or five years I did just that: write when my son went off to school in the morning. The older my son became, the more I realized that he needed more attention. He was getting to be a teenager and he wanted to bring people home and I would say, "I can't do that, I'm trying to finish this story." So finally I quit. I'll never forget the day. I was trying to finish a story and he had brought two boys home for lunch. I was trying to fix lunch and finish the story, and I thought, "I'm not going to do this anymore. This is just running me crazy."

I was just torn apart. Because if you do good work, at least for me, it takes the first fruits of your energy—mental, emotional, everything. So I just stopped, and I'm not sorry. I really don't regret it because I'll never write anything as good as my living son, who would leave his office and bring me over here. Then my husband died 20 years ago and I would have had terrible regrets if I hadn't tried to do the best I could. Then my time came. I was alone in the country. I remember somebody saying, "Well, what are you going to do? You can't live out there by yourself!" Well, I didn't know what I was going to do. I lived there all my life, except for the seven years I lived in Auburn. But during those years I had gotten an agent, though I was not really writing a great deal. So I really began to write at this time.

Interviewer: It sounds like you were encouraged. People told you that you had talent. Is that true?

Brown: I was always encouraged. I was always greatly encouraged.

Interviewer: No one told you, "Well, I don't think you should be writing?"

Brown: No, everybody said, "You should be writing." This agent that I had in New York with a good agency wrote a book himself; it's called *A Hill*. He was a conscientious objector during World War II and he did alternate service in a mental institution, which is what the book is about. My roommate at Judson had schizophrenia and her illness was devastating. Well, I wanted to know what her life was like in an institution. So I read that book. I thought that this was a good writer; his name was Victor Chapin. So I wrote him a letter and told him that I thought he was a wonderful writer and that I was sorry that his book didn't sell better. He wrote back and said that he was a reader for an agent. I had told him in the letter that I had tried to write short stories and he said that he could tell in the letter that I could write. So they took me in and all of a sudden I had an agent.

Interviewer: What advice would you tell an aspiring writer? Do you believe in creative writing courses? Do you believe that they help?

Brown: Yes, I think that they do help. First, you need to read. I read and write every day that I don't do something like this or play with my grandchildren.

Interviewer: What is your usual routine?

Brown: Whenever I wake up, usually about 4:00 in the morning, I drink some coffee and have a couple of pieces of toast, then I get back in bed and start to work in longhand. You can really concentrate early in the morning. I work for two or three hours, then you can't do it anymore. I then get up, fool around, get my clothes on, wash my face. Then I type what I've written, but I write very slowly, a bleeder it's called. Every morning I start at the beginning and I pay a lot of attention to style. My own style.

Interviewer: Then you're not a writer who writes, goes back, and continuously edits the work?

Brown: I edit from the beginning. I have to have everything right as I go along. Whenever I read over the work the next morning, I try to get the work right. But I don't do it all at once. In one reading I'll just keep reading it over and over. I'll see that that's not exactly the way it was or that it is not exactly what he would have said. I spend a lot of time of dialogue. Speech is wonderful, but you and I, the way we are talking, would be boring in fiction. You have to cut it down to the essence. Then you have to get the true essence, which is a different thing. But this is really a matter of style.

Interviewer: Your characters talk for a reason. There really isn't any chatter between your characters. For instance, in "The Barbecue," when the storekeeper talks, there is a reason. There is no waste; there is a reason for his saying what he is saying. Whatever he says helps the purpose of the story.

Brown: Well, there is also a fictional truth in dialogue. In another story there is a Dr. Dobbs who drives up next to this girl and says, "I wish I could help you." But then I couldn't think what he would say next. There was something true he would say. It took me days; then it dawned on me. That kind of thing is what I'm talking about.

Interviewer: When you begin writing a story do you already have an idea as to what the story is going to be, or do you create as you write?

Brown: A little of both.

Interviewer: Do you feel like fiction has a purpose for helping to change society? What I'm referring to are the racial relations in your stories. I get the feeling from your stories that you are commenting on the injustice. I don't think you preach to the reader, but it seems as though you do try to make a point with it. The black children in "Fruit of the Season" are aware of the situation of their mother and they react to it. Do you try to comment on society with your writing?

Brown: No, I try not to. I mean I don't want to. Fiction is not a vehicle for that kind of thing. I'm just trying to tell the truth about what I see. I just try to picture the way things are or were at the time. I just try to make it as true as possible because I don't know what is right. I don't see myself on one side or the other. I'm just looking. Someone once asked me, "Why do you always write about race and religion?" Well, that's all there is. Those are the main two subjects in the South.

Interviewer: Do your characters come from real people that you know? Do the situations come from real situations?

Brown: The situations tend to come from real situations.

Interviewer: Do you write to a certain audience?

Brown: No, I'm writing to tell the truth.

Interviewer: What is the spark that makes you want to sit down and write a particular story?

Brown: Something that somebody says or something that you see, or something that you hear, or something that you think of just sticks in your mind. Then you start from that.

That story "New Dresses" is from when a friend of mine told me that her daughter-in-law had cancer and that the daughter-in-law told her family that she wanted to buy a pretty dress, but nothing was said about why she was going or why she wanted the dress. When she bought the dress that she picked out, she said, "Well, let's get another one." So they bought her another one. My friend said that she could hardly think about it without crying. I just kept thinking about it and that's the way my story came about.

Interviewer: It seems that more people are writing in the short story form now. Do you believe there is a resurgence of the short story form?

Brown: I think to a certain degree there is. One reason is that novels take such a long commitment. It takes me hours, sometimes two or three days to read a novel. On the other hand, you can read a short story in 25 to 30 minutes.

Interviewer: Why do you choose to write in the short story form?

Brown: I don't really think that the writer really chooses. I think that it comes naturally what you do. Like poets, for instance, they just think in those terms. Of course, you have to learn the craft of what you're doing. Some people write to go on and on, but I don't.

Interviewer: Have you ever tried to write a novel?

Brown: No, I don't want to. I think that short story writers are born, not made.

Interviewer: Do you think that the short story form is better than other forms of writing?

Brown: No, I don't think that it is better; it is just what I like to do.

Interviewer: Are you surprised at the amount of attention you have received?

Brown: Yes, I really am.

Interviewer: Do you enjoy attending these types of functions?

Brown: I enjoy everything but the performance. After I got going I did fine in my reading, but I dreaded it. I really dread it; it makes me so nervous to get up in front of people. I woke up at 4:00 the last few mornings worrying about the reading. I have visions of getting up there and falling flat on my face.

Interviewer: The South has a strong tradition of good writers, such as Flannery O'Connor, Eudora Welty, and William Faulkner. Why do you think this tradition is so strong?

Brown: I don't know. That old thing about the tradition of storytellers is always mentioned, but you know, my family never told stories.

Interviewer: Do you think it has anything to do with the Southern sensitivity?

Brown: I really don't have any ideas about that. I know one thing, a lot of writers don't want to be branded as Southern writers because they're afraid of being thought of as regional writers. But I love being a Southern writer because I like the South.

Interviewer: Who are your favorite Southern writers?

Brown: William Faulkner was a great writer. I think that Flannery O'Connor, in her own way, is as great. No, no, that's not true. She doesn't have the scope. But I think that she was a great Southern writer.

Interviewer: What do you think of Truman Capote?

Brown: I think *In Cold Blood* is wonderful and it broke some new ground. A lot of people have followed him since then, like Norman Mailer. I like "A Christmas Memory," but I don't think that Truman Capote is up there with Faulkner and Flannery O'Connor.

Interviewer: Why do you think people like to read about the South?

Brown: I don't think people want to read about the South any more than any other place. If a writer is good, then people want to read him. I think Barry Hannah is a good Southern writer. He's gone kind of crazy, but I like his craziness. It was not successful in *Hey Jack*. It was good Barry Hannah, but no way could it be called a good novel. Padgett Powell was a good Southern writer. I think Twain was a great writer, but I don't like him. I don't like writers who try to be funny. If what's in the story is funny, like sex, I like it, but Mark Twain was trying to be funny too much. Of course, you just can't like everybody.

Interviewer: One of the golden rules for a writer is that you should show instead of tell. Do you believe in that?

Brown: Straight narrative is hard to keep somebody's attention with. It's more effective if you show instead of tell. You should make little scenes, vivid little scenes. It's harder to show the reader. But that doesn't mean it's the best way to write. Some writers can go on and on with straight narrative; Faulkner does it and he's so good. You have to be absolutely first rate to do that. Like that first woman who read today [Elly Welt], I really listened and liked what she said about that meditation place.

Interviewer: As I read your collection of stories, I kept thinking that these are such good Southern tales. I know these places, these people; it really rang true for me as a Southerner. But then when I listened to you read that story today, I didn't get the feeling of a Southern tale. I thought, "This is just real people, real human beings." Do you think that rings true with your stories?

Brown: Yes, I wish they were all like that. If they're not, then they are failures. I think only time tells if you have failed or if you have succeeded. I collect books. I go to garage sales, Goodwill looking for books. You can buy these books for 50 cents, but most of them are so bad that the people who wrote them were really just wasting their time. I am always wondering if my book will be here in two or three years. But I'll say this: a text doesn't have to have an author with it to be effective. The writing should do that for itself. Chekhov's stories do not have to have Chekhov to make his stories good. The story should stand on its own without a reader, except you the reader. My stories should not have to have me reading them to an audience for them to be good.

Interviewer: Does all this attention you're getting affect how you write?

Brown: No, no, it doesn't. All I think about when I sit down to write is the story itself. When I go home, all this will be behind me and I'll just hope I can get past the first paragraph in the new story. I also hope my last story, the one the *New Yorker* rejected, will be published.

Interviewer: Do you get a lot of rejections?

Brown: I don't anymore. The *New Yorker* always rejects my stories. They're never going to publish one of my stories. I just don't write their kind of story. I'm not discouraged by it. I really don't like what they publish. Their stories just aren't real to me. You'll begin reading one and you'll think, "I don't care anything about these people."

Interviewer: Do you think that a person can write good literature and still have it sell?

Brown: Some people do; it's just hard. J.F. Powers writes about Roman Catholic priests and he has written a book that is doing very well, and he's a first-rate writer.

Interviewer: How do you feel about the praise you have received from the scholars?

Brown: I really don't know what to make of it. People who don't read much, say "I love your book." I think that I've just written a popular book.

Interviewer: But isn't that good?

Brown: Yes, but usually only a reader who is a trained reader reads literature. These people just read for entertainment. So I don't know what to think. People at home just love that book.

Interviewer: But Dickens was very popular in his time.

Brown: Yes, but he's not the greatest literary artist in the world. He's a great writer. But I really try to make art. I try to make the whole story as beautiful as possible. I try to make the words and sentences as beautiful as possible. About half of what I write I take out because they're too much for my simplicity. It has to be first of all true; then it can be beautiful.

· POET'S · CORNER ·

Hand-me-down: A poem for Aunt Nina

Nancy Compton Williams
J.O. Johnson High School, Huntsville, Alabama

A quarter century ago
you stood in this Pendleton plaid
teaching beloved ideas—
praising young ones.
Your gift to the world
continues on in me
as I stand before
the new generation
in your old Pendleton plaid.
Together we mold, comfort, inspire.
I am the daughter you never had.
We birth others who will bear our name.

The Works of Hudson Strode and Some of his Students

G. E. Geiger

G. E. Geiger is Special Collections Librarian at Auburn University, where he gathers and displays books and manuscripts of all kinds written by Alabamians. His regular contribution to Alabama English *focuses on a different group of Alabama writers each issue.*

This is a bibliographic addition to Thomas Rountree's tribute to Hudson Strode published in the last issue of *Alabama English*. Since Rountree gave a feeling of what it must have been like to work with Strode, I decided to do a bibliographic follow-up. In the beginning, I intended to identify those students of Strode who produced only a single novel or work of nonfiction. However, with few authors receiving the acclaim of Harriet Hassell, that task proved too difficult. Therefore, I expanded my original idea to include as many of Strode's students as I could identify and listed Strode's works as well. The search yielded 45 authors, some with only one book but most with several published works.

As Rountree says, Strode's students pursued interesting and varied careers after completing their work with him. For example, Hugo Black, Jr., son of US Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black, is now an attorney, practicing law in Miami. He produced only one book, a memoir to his father. William S. Cannon was drawn away from writing to enter another profession. Shortly after graduating from the University of Alabama, Cannon entered the Southwestern Baptist Seminary. He served as pastor of several Baptist churches before accepting a position with Broadman Press in 1966. His later writings deal with religion.

Moving from literary to nonliterary writing are Alfred Delano Livingston, Wayne Greenhaw, Thomas H. Phillips, and Ann Waldron. Livingston is the author of several books about cheating at cards, winning at cards, and catching bass. His latest tome is a fish and game cookbook. Greenhaw was the owner and publisher of what is now called *Alabama Magazine*. The magazine is currently owned by Alabama Magazine, Inc., and Greenhaw serves as Editor-at-Large. After publishing five novels, Phillips turned to writing screenplays. His most famous works include *Tarzan's Fight for Life, The Brain Machine, Minstrel Man, Walking Tall II, Huckleberry Finn, Nightmare in Badham County,* and *Roll of Thunder: Hear My Cry*. Waldron, a Birmingham native, began her career writing children's books.

In addition to the students who can definitely be placed in Strode's classes, other students at the University of Alabama during Strode's tenure also later became writers. For example, William C. Berney was at Alabama during the 1940s, as were Cleo Lucas, Dorothy Schwartz, Gay Talese, G. C. Skipper, Howell Vines, Walter Rigdon, and Mona Sheppard. It would be interesting to know if these writers were influenced by Strode.

Finally, as Rountree points out, the first student to publish a novel under Strode's guidance was Harriet Hassell, and the last four students whose publications I could find are Nancy Dickson Shivers, Russell Lamar, W. F. Ward III, and Dot Palmer. Shivers's most recent piece is an article about Madison Jones. If the 45 students identified and the 234 works listed in this bibliography are the total of Strode's former students and their works, this represents an average yearly publication rate of almost nine books per year from 1937 to 1963. This alone is a remarkable feat. What other teacher of creative writing could boast such success? And even more significantly, Strode's influence continues since some of his former students now teach creative writing.

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Preparing to Teach Writing

By James D. Williams. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1989.

Reviewed by
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Teachers of writing at all levels need to be more than mere grading machines with built-in error detectors, although what more to be is the subject of much disagreement and relegating ourselves to the role of grading machine often seems the least threatening course of action. To discover and justify just what that something "more" can or should be requires that each of us not only develop a solid historical perspective of the broad field of language skills but also keep abreast of current theory, research, and methodology for each of its components, a generally impossible chore to fit in amongst the neverending grading tasks we assign ourselves. In *Preparing to Teach Writing*, James D. Williams hopes to assist those pursuing a public school teaching credential by presenting a detailed treatment of the theories, research, and methods that shape the teaching of composition today. Inadvertently, he has produced an excellent review and discussion of research and practice for experienced teachers, who are endeavoring to understand the consequences of their current pedagogy.

Williams postulates writing as a psychosocial action that is inherently dynamic, rhetorical, and pragmatic (opposing the notion that writing is merely a transcription of thought); so, instead of providing his reader with a "cookbook" recipe of lesson plans for teaching a course in writing, he coaxes his reader to develop, within the guidelines of his or her school district, a research-based construct of the actual processes of writing, to apply that construct to the environment of the classroom, and to develop writing assignments and daily activities that enable students to recognize their writing processes and products as functional and intentional.

Williams divides his book into two major sections. Part one comprises the first two-thirds of the volume and provides a comprehensive review and evaluation of research on writing: the "ethos" of classical rhetoric and the pragmatism of the medieval dialectic; the ground-breaking twentieth-century language-acquisition studies by Piaget, Vygotsky, and Chomsky; and the most current language studies that inform Williams's own approach to the teaching of writing. Much of the section is spent debunking myths of writing instruction: "interestingly enough, research indicates that assignments with a great deal of rhetorical specification yield worse essays than more general assignments. . . . Prewriting is such an intuitively reasonable prerequisite to competent composing, and it has become such an enshrined part of writing pedagogy, that many teachers can't avoid feeling uneasy when they discover that there are no reliable data to suggest that prewriting activities of the sort mentioned above have any measurable effect on writing performance. . . ," and so on. Williams devotes chapters to theory and research on the connections of rhetoric (speech, in the classical sense), reading, grammar, stylistics, and nonstandard English to writing.

Part two presents a methodology for applying the theory and research previously discussed in structuring a classroom, in devising writing assignments, and in grading and evaluating student writing. Methods for setting up the classroom as a workshop, for structuring work groups and collaborative learning, for grading group participation, and for promoting writing across the curriculum are also discussed. The topic of working with non-traditional students is broached only briefly to note that, since many aspects of language acquisition are universal, the non-traditional student can benefit from the same pedagogical approaches designed for traditional students. Chapters on "Writing Assignments" and "Assessing Writing" provide interesting and practical insights into these very subjective teaching activities. The latter chapter provides an overview of holistic grading and portfolio grading, accompanied by rubrics for grading at different class levels and sample essays evaluated according to the appropriate rubric.

The references section contains an excellent, representative collection of the seminal studies and reports on the topic of writing drawn from disciplines such as cognitive psychology, philosophy, psycholinguistics, rhetoric and composition, and sociolinguistics. The in-text citations efficiently refer readers to primary sources as well as to significant supplementary sources. One might easily design a personal course of research based on this bibliography alone.

In the preface, the author says of his book, "It balances an in-depth discussion of theory and research with a detailed discussion of effective methods." The discussion of theory and research, is, if anything, more than Williams promises. It is scholarly writing at its finest, paying proper homage to format, style, and content; and it is something more—completely intelligible, effectively qualified, and truly inspiring. While the book displays a perceptible pedagogical bias, that bias appears to be the thoughtful product of rather than an operative factor in the author's own extensive evaluation of research.

The section on methodology, however, does not live up to its billing as a "detailed presentation of effective teaching methods." The chapter on "The Classroom as a Workshop" provides only enough detail for an experienced teacher to refine troublesome aspects of such a process already in place. In 10 pages, the author can say so little about "Teaching the Nonmainstream Student" that it might be more responsible to include an imperative that, on this one, the teacher seek help from a professional trained in the field of ESL or other "special needs." "Writing Assignments" and "Assessing Writing," while more detailed than the preceding chapters, are probably not as detailed as a student teacher might want or expect. But, that is as it should be. To construct assignments with the social efficacy that Williams advocates, one must work with the immediate context in clear focus—the particular students, the classroom environment, and the cultural and physical geography of the community. Having greater impact on the student teacher than on the experienced teacher, these deficiencies do not detract significantly from the overall value of the book.

Preparing to Teach Writing should be fascinating and valuable reading for teachers of writing at all levels, so universal are its components and so appropriate and pleasurable is the author's own writing style. Novice and veteran teachers, alike, should benefit immensely from the review of theory and research. Anyone who truly cares about the teaching of writing is likely to find cherished misconceptions about a process we still know too little about judiciously challenged.

A Novel About a White Man and a Black Man in the Deep South

By James Saxon Childers. 1936. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama Press, 1989. 276 pp.

Reviewed by
Gail Regier
Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama

James Saxon Childers's best known novel, usually referred to by the short title *In the Deep South*, has been brought back into print as part of the University of Alabama's Library of Alabama Classics series. Written in 1936 and set in Childers's native Birmingham, *In the Deep South* is the story of the friendship between Gordon, a white journalist, and Dave, a black musician. This friendship arouses the ire of members of the local Ku Klux Klan, who harass both men (as well as Gordon's sister Anne, who has been seen to associate with Dave) and frame Dave for arson. Dave is eventually acquitted of the charge, but the conflict destroys the friendship between him and Gordon, and Anne is made so distraught by it that she commits suicide.

Childers, a well-known author, journalist, and educator, was a moderate Southern liberal of a type that doesn't really exist anymore. He believed in social justice and racial equality, but felt that such matters must be taken very slowly and that active protest in favor of civil rights would only retard their progress. Because of this, *In the Deep South* no longer seems controversial, but instead a bit dated and quaint. The most explicit statement of the author's beliefs comes near the end of the novel, in a conversation between Gordon and Dave's (white) lawyer, Pickens:

> What do [Northerners] know about conditions down here? I mean

> conditions as they actually are, not the nonsense they put on Broadway. . . . There are thousands of others like us who are trying right now to help the Negro and better social conditions down here. . . . Why can't they come to progressive Southern leaders and say that they want to help, and let's talk it over?

This scene is a bit confusing, since in fact no "yankee agitators" appear as characters in the novel. But states' rights and a vague paranoia about Northern repression seem to have been on the author's mind. After Dave is acquitted, the judge addresses these last words to a circle of newspaper reporters:

> I'm an old man now, and all my life I've tried to learn the curious workings of men's minds; but I find it difficult to understand the North's attitude toward our great interracial difficulties in the Southland. Tell me, gentlemen, what are you people trying to do? Would you cure a slow-healing wound by rubbing sand into it?

In the characters of Gordon and Dave, Childers captures the peculiar challenge faced by moderates in the South, both white and black. They were criticized by progressives as supporters of discrimination and by conservatives as proponents of integration. In a sense they were both; their program was the doctrine of "separate but equal" treatment that was tolerated by American law until the Supreme Court's 1956 *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision. Childers's novel regretfully but firmly supports this view in both political and social relations.

Considered simply as a novel, *In the Deep South* has many weaknesses. Childers changes point of view often, telling some chapters from Dave's perspective, some from Gordon's, and some in the voices of other characters. His intention seems to be to give us a multicultural and multiracial view of the action, as William Faulkner does in many of his works. But Childers lacks Faulkner's ability to maintain narrative suspense while changing point of view, and the result is that we lose interest in both characters and story. Another problem is the way time is handled. After an action-filled beginning reminiscent of a detective story, the book spends all too much time in leisurely flashbacks, telling us the life stories of Gordon and Dave before they met. The climax of the book—Dave's trial for arson—is so sketchy and undramatic that one feels the author has lost interest in the original story he set out to tell.

Childers experiments with stream of consciousness and with inserting passages of verse between chapters, but neither experiment is very successful. He has an insider's knowledge of small-time Southern business and politics, and his account of these processes is striking and realistic. As well, his description of Harlem during its 1920s Renaissance is one of the best I have read, though his underlying theme—that Harlem was good because it gave blacks their "own" place—reflects a separatist thesis.

Would this book be useful in the classroom? As a story, it will not hold most students' attention. But it has considerable documentary value as a resource for studying Southern social history and race relations. It would not do as a basic text; the attitudes it describes are too narrow and unrepresentative. But it would work well as a supplement to such commonly used books as William Joseph Cash's *The Mind of the South* or the fiction of such authors as William Faulkner, Zora Hurston, and Richard Wright. *In the Deep South* reflects attitudes that were much more widespread in the South than most books now available would indicate. Childers's brand of liberalism, particularly his view that "separate but equal" race relations were the road to equality, was much more widely held than is now realized. However history may have repudiated this view, we need to understand it, and this book vividly recreates the attitudes and personalities of the many who held it.

Being and Race: Black Writing Since 1970

By Charles Johnson. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1988. 132 pp. $15.95

Reviewed by
Patricia Gaston
Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama

Being and Race: Black Writing Since 1970 can be read two ways, either as a historical overview of recent Black American fiction or as a phenomenological approach to that corpus. The first approach will give the reader more satisfaction. Charles Johnson's text fulfills an important function in that it lists, describes, and evaluates an inclusive group of novels, short stories, and anthologies by black American authors. By doing this, Johnson demonstrates the vigor and extent of this literature, while providing a thorough, annotated reading list.

Particularly informative as historical overviews are Johnson's chapters "Being and Race" and "The Men." Johnson traces the development of Black American fiction beginning with *Clotelle, or the Black Heroine* (1853) through its post-Civil War phase and the Harlem Renaissance, which spanned the 1920s and included Jean Toomer, Zora Neal Hurston, George Schuyler, and Wallace Thurman. Johnson next discusses the Depression and the "birth of the Federal Writers' Project, which offered creative outlets to a younger generation that would become major writers in the 1930s and 1950s—Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, Frank Yerby, William Motley." Also during the 1930s and 1940s "the concept of Negritude was developed . . . and nurtured a literary movement memorable in its attempt to give authenticity to a unique African personality. Next came the Black Arts Movement." Johnson disapproves of these literary movements as overtly political and overly simplistic in their thinking. Here we have a glimpse of what Johnson intends to establish for Black American fiction: status not as a minority literature, nor as an integral part of a national literature, but as occurrences of "great literature" ("which is all I [Johnson] care to consider here") reflecting moments of universal human experience.

That "enduring literature" should be apolitical, nonutilitarian, and universal in its depiction of what it means to be human are Johnson's basic critical tenets. To establish these categories as important, Johnson claims that his reading of Black American fiction is essentially phenomenological—by which he apparently means that he makes appeal to some form of universal human experience, or state of Being, the reader's experience of which may be triggered by something immediate, personal, or historical but which transcends all that for something more ephemeral and valid. Johnson never tells us what this transcendent something is—only that it is the essence of universal literature. Inversely, he doesn't tell us what universal literature is exactly—only that it transcends political and historical boundaries.

For all his scattered references to Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty in this text, Johnson does very little to clarify the basic working terms and concepts of what he means by phenomenology. Instead, Johnson indulges in what appears to be a combination of philosophical name-dropping and popular culture mysticism.

Johnson is more clearly Aristotelian in his establishment of the characteristics of "great literature." While he hesitates to name the *Poetics* and only occasionally smuggles Aristotle's name into this text, it is clear from Johnson's dogged insistence that novels should be drama that he has lifted these tenets from Aristotle's seminal literary theory. By doing so, Johnson establishes what seems to be a grounding in universal human experience; by buying into Aristotle's categories for writing "great drama," Johnson also accepts Aristotle's hypotheses that there are indeed universally recognizable and significant human dilemmas (which lead to plot), personalities and their attendant flaws (which account for characterization), and modes of dramatic presentation (which necessitate "showing" rather than "telling"). The point that fiction is not in fact drama seems lost on Johnson.

Johnson's third touchstone in his evaluation of "enduring literature" is John Gardner. In 1979, Gardner published *On Moral Fiction*, a notably conservative manifesto concerning the duty of literature to be morally instructive and "life affirming." Again, the point is that "great literature" transcends immediate, pragmatic, historical, and political boundaries and validates itself through involvement in creating universal good.

Well—so far, so good: the phenomenology is muddy, but when is it not? Besides, Aristotle and Gardner will serve by themselves. But Johnson's philosophy contains a flaw so great that it may cause his text to deconstruct itself—or at least expose its readers to essential confusion. Here's how the flaw works: having set up his framework for identifying "great literature," Johnson sets beside it black Americans' historical situation, one of eternal identity crisis—which element is more philosophically important: race or nationality? By tying their dilemma back in with his insistence on universals, Johnson apparently solves it; neither category of identity is more important than a consideration of the universal human quest for identity, and both are subsumed under that. This approach to reading Black American literature is bound to encourage debate.

However, Johnson cannot get away from elements of specific importance to black fiction—for example, the historical impact of the church as a touchstone in black American life or the equally important family dynamics which determine black self-worth and identity. Even here, some tie-ins are possible with Johnson's universals. But Johnson makes these universals the categories of Western male experience, and by doing so creates an overtly sexist text. The first clue to this stance is textual—Johnson's second unit is divided into "The Men," which runs for 37 pages and is supplemented by "Notes for Philosophical Works," and "The Women," which includes only 24 pages and is the only chapter in this text without endnotes. Dividing this unit by authors' sex accomplishes nothing that could not have been done better through division by topic or genre.

Further clues are even more overt. Johnson's use of "generic" masculine pronouns throughout becomes something more than conventional usage when considered in relation to "The Women." Johnson views black female writers as egocentric since they insist that their personal, political, and historical lives are important and because they refuse to "transcend." He accuses these writers of being derivative and finds male models for each, while in similar narrative situations—incorporating dialect or folklore into their fiction, for example—he claims that black male writers learn from and improve upon past literature.

Johnson prohibits black female writers from indicting black male sexual promiscuity and abuse. He sees black male characters portrayed by black male writers as involved in multiple sexual liaisons as experiencing an important personal awakening, as playfully machismo, and as "deformed by their lack of power in a racially divided Landscape . . . drawn powerfully to women for relief." Johnson also values Clarence Major's basic working metaphor in *Emergency Exit*: "the mysterious, feminine power of doorways and thresholds," the idea of "the mystical body of woman." But Johnson finds Toni Morrison's, Alice Walker's, Gayl L. Jones's and Gloria Naylor's portrayals of male sexuality shrill and accusing. He attributes this stance to the disintegration of the black family and attendant loss of female social status and to "the obvious fact that black males have traditionally found it easier to move forward in society, even to marry whites." Thus, history, politics, and personal experience collide, and Johnson's appeal to universals rings false.

Where do these considerations leave us? Perhaps with the contemplation of the idea that sexism itself is a universal, a basic element of human life. Or with the idea that human life is in fact defined by time and place, race and sex, age, and economics—by history, personal experience, and politics. Either way, the concluding chapter of *Being and Race* is startling and disturbing.

Rhythm and Writing

By Robert S. Ochsner. Troy, NY: Whitson, 1989. 140 pp. $18.50.

Reviewed by
Dorothy Grimes
University of Montevallo, Montevallo, Alabama

If the seductive simplicity of its title were matched by equally seductive and simple argument, Robert Ochsner's *Rhythm and Writing* would be required reading for writing teachers. Another example that one can't judge a book by its cover, this small volume promises *less* than it delivers, for it delivers more than the average graduate student in stylistics could take in.

To give Ochsner his due, the book begins simply enough and gives momentary hope to a reader who has some intuition about those unexplained (and perhaps inexplicable) connections between the voice a writer hears as he or she writes and the voice that a reader hears as he or she reads that writer's work. Ochsner's title and initial pages suggest that perhaps *at last* someone not only understands the relationship of rhythm and writing but can explain it to those of us who spend our lives trying to help others hear and create that magical thing called "style."

The first of the book's seven short chapters is a clearly written overview of the entire book. Arguing that "rhythm controls how we perceive and produce a written text," Ochsner claims he will first show what one can learn by "self-conscious attention to language." In doing so, he aims to "identify emergent signs of style by tracing them back to underlying rhythms that produce language," and then to "identify authors of unusual styles and to explain why their writing differs from an underlying norm." In effect, the study looks at style first from the perspective of the writer in the act of producing it and second from the perspective of the reader in the process of "negotiat[ing] a style" with the writer.

Ochsner is explicit about the theory on which his book is based. It is based on the assumption that if "rhythm controls the writing process, and style defines the written product," then "by studying rhythm in speech and prose we have access to the nature of ideation itself." Ochsner's first chapter also lays out the plan for the book. Chapter two is a review of rhythm research and its relation to general language study. Chapter three presents an alternative method of research which views rhythm as a psychological as well as a physical entity. Chapter four shows how "a hierarchy of Strong (S) and Weak (W) relationships within breath groups develops into psychological, abstract forms of rhythm." Chapter five uses "a relational `umbrella'" for explaining how physical rhythm takes on "abstract psychological forms," and chapter six uses this "umbrella" as a tool to analyze both expository and literary texts. Chapter seven extends this form of metrical study into a method of inquiry, a method which, Ochsner argues, explains why many college students write poorly—i.e., "because they have not mastered the physical rhythms of generating a text."

Although the writer of *Rhythm and Writing* has indeed put into this small volume an impressive amount of solidly based research and has presented it in a disarmingly honest argument, the book is at best uneven. Ochsner's most sympathetic readers will probably be the scholars who have been over most of the scholarship for themselves and can thus nod accent when Ochsner admits limits (e.g., "all language study is half science and half magic") or applaud when he jettisons academic timidity (e.g., "No theory can make a stronger claim, for I'm fusing point-of-view with form and content.") The reader who knows little about the subject will be enticed by the first-person, informal style of the book, but he or she will soon conclude that more than informal style is needed to bridge the gap between novice and scholar. And Ochsner's assumptions about what the reader does or doesn't know seem inconsistent. In an apology for his use of "technical apparatus" in chapter four, he begs the reader to "Bear with me," but then proceeds to contrast metrical systems (e.g., Schane and Liberman) rather than explaining his own in light of them. Is a review of the literature really necessary if his audience lacks the sophistication in the field that his style seems to attribute to them?

The fact that the book is heavily documented seems out of keeping with its direct, first-person voice; approximately 20 of the book's 144 or so pages are taken up with notes and bibliography—in smaller print than the text. One suspects that this disorienting juxtaposition of folksiness and scholarship is at least partially the result of the monumental task of transmuting part of a dissertation and an article from *Style* into part of a book readily accessible to a broad range of the profession. (According to the acknowledgments, about 30 pages of the volume are from Ochsner's 1980 dissertation at UCLA and another 25 pages or so are from *Style*.)

Yet I suspect that the book will find its place on the bookshelf of many graduate students and even college professors who like the author's courage and his conversational style—a style that is more like the chat with the conference presenter after his or her paper has been read than it is like the paper itself. This is not Ross Winterowd or Richard Lanham (though the author names Lanham as a model), but if a reader finds either of them insightful, Ochsner is enough like them to merit perusal, even if his work suffers by the comparison.

Word Processing in a Community of Writers: An Introduction to Composition

By John Elder, Jeffrey Schwartz, Betsy Bowen, and Dixie Goswami.
New York: Garland, 1989. 199 pp.

Reviewed by
Blair Spencer Ray
University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, Alabama

Word Processing in a Community of Writers is a textbook which combines writing instruction informed by current composition theory with instruction in the use of the word processor as a facilitator of composition. Chapters 1-7 of the 10 chapters provide the basis of the textbook through brief passages of explanation and instruction, predominantly student-written models, and practice assignments called "Invitations to Write." Although use of the computer is clearly the focus of the first several chapters, where, for instance, the "fluidity" of text produced on a computer is emphasized, composition instruction in a more traditional form is gradually added. A balance between computer instruction and composition instruction is maintained until student readers are likely to have become comfortable with the computer. Chapters 5-7 then deal more intensively with sophisticated composition concerns such as "Argument" and "The Researched Essay" and less with the physical demands of adapting the technology to the writing task.

The recursive nature of writing is emphasized and related to the computer's enabling potential for writers to return effortlessly to earlier steps in their thinking and planning. "Explorations" provide students with opportunities to practice discovery in journal-like computer entries. Related to "explorations" is training in developing "angles of entry," varying ways of looking at one particular idea. The text includes not only question-prompts students might use as part of their discovery process but also instructions for adding their own heuristics and permanently installing the resulting list on their personal computer disks. Reiteration of the ease with which the computer allows exploration and experimentation characterizes the textbook. The authors also suggest specific ways for using the computer to provide "correspondence" (collaboration) and criteria for peer-editors to apply as they critique each other's writing.

Although the computer is discussed generically in Chapters 1-7, which comprise Part I, " A Model for Exploration, Correspondence, and Revision," Part II, "Additional Resources," provides three chapters containing very specific information about on-line searches, extended collaboration among writers, and specialized software for editing. A detailed Appendix supplies concise basic directions for using Wordperfect 4.2, Microsoft Word 4.0, and XyWrite III for IBMs and compatibles; Microsoft Word 3.01 for the MacIntosh; and AppleWorks for the Apple IIe, IIc, or IIGS. A glossary furnishes computer users with the most essential basic vocabulary, and an annotated bibliography completes this well-balanced textbook.

I consider *Word Processing in a Community of Writers* to be an answer to a prayer. In it, a wealth of practical information designed to bring readers up to speed is expressed in clear, readable prose. The textbook excels as a leveler for both teachers and students. The authors reassure as they inform, the source of their comfortable tone their obvious familiarity with both the advantages and the disadvantages of writing with the computer. Although they are very knowledgeable about software, they are equally respectful of the uses to which enterprising teachers can put the computer without benefit of sophisticated programs. Their suggestions for devising useful teaching strategies with the computer testify to their awareness of the computer's potential for helping writers to write better.

Word Processing in a Community of Writers is less than 200 pages long, and the instructional chapters take up only 140 pages. The authors have effectively refined the requisite information about computer writing to a minimum. This brief presentation should prevent students' spending too much time on the tool and too little on the product. Another strength of the text is its exploitation--both implicit and explicit—of the metaphor of the computer itself for the intellectual process of composition.

While the textbook is attractive and easy to read in the best tradition of effective format design, it is physically hard to handle. The stiffness of the cover and pages prevents the book from lying open, inconveniencing a reader working at a computer. Another small problem is that the half-dozen or so references throughout the book to college students and the college scene may prohibit high school teachers from selecting a textbook which would work very nicely for their students, too. In addition, the complexity of the language is occasionally inconsistent: readers encounter "rhetorical context" without an accompanying explanation of that sophisticated phrase but read about "sound-alike words, or homonyms" and are alerted to words which are "ambiguous, or hard to understand."

The effectiveness of *Word Processing in a Community of Writers* is not seriously impaired by these few problems. The book achieves an impressive number of goals in relatively few pages. It painlessly educates readers about the computer as writing tool and seems to make the computer an unobtrusive part of the composition process. Where many textbooks touch only briefly—and not very helpfully—on the essential questions writers must ask themselves as they write and as they edit the writing of others, this book offers very specific advice. And, finally, *Word Processing in a Community of Writers* capitalizes upon the ways in which word processing incorporated into the composition process allows a highly beneficial correspondence among writers.

· POET'S · CORNER ·

Be Welcome —— Beware

Art Belliveau
Mt. Olive School, Seale, Alabama

If you are the Encourager,
The Captain of your mind's voyage
Into the seas and oceans of
New and wonderous ideas:
Be Welcome!

Together we can journey far
With mutual help and reassurance
With all four hands upon the rudder
(Yours firmly, mine lightly)
We can reach new treasure troves of discovery.

If you are the Belittler,
The Pirate who raids away time
And steals enthusiasm both from yourself
And others, then I warn you:
Beware!

The battle lines are sharp and clear.
I fight stubbornly, never giving up,
Because I'm fighting *for* you even though
I'm fighting *with* you to lower your
Pirate's flag and sail away peacefully
Upon your own course.

My Professional Concern

Emil W. Kaul
Bullock County High School, Union Springs High School,
Union Springs, Alabama

The time has come for drastic change in the English curriculum. The scope and sequence of our current curriculum are having a stultifying effect on the students we purport to serve, mainly because of the redundancy. Too many young writers are being lost in a sea of "basic competencies." Many won't finish school, and others will manage to graduate, fully documented as having mastered the "basic skills," yet unable to write coherently. Nothing short of a complete overhaul in the structure of the English curriculum and a turnabout from the declining test scores paranoia will solve our dilemma. Let's stop administering extreme unction to a dying curriculum plan and start applying some of the methods that work. The design that worked so well 50 or a 100 years ago will not work today, and no amount of innovation in instructional methods and materials will work well in an outdated design. What really concerns me about all of this is the number of people who act as if nothing is wrong. Maybe I worry too much. After all, not *that* many children are dropping out.

Patricia K. Palmore
Andalusia Middle School, Andalusia, Alabama

There seems to be an increase each year in the number of students who have severe emotional handicaps to learning in the English classroom. When there are several in an already large class, the result can be extremely frustrating for the teacher. Just like physically handicapped students, these students need certain accommodations, such as one-on-one teaching. The teacher also needs time to research the student's background, perhaps talk with family members, former teachers, and the school counselor. This extra attention adds to the work of the overloaded teacher. The personal satisfaction stemming from success with such a student is inspirational, but when one considers all those who were neglected because there are limits on one's energy and time, that satisfaction pales considerably. I have found community volunteers to be the best help with difficult students. Parents volunteer to come weekly for an hour with a particular student.

My Professional Concern

Pamela P. Turner
Fairhope High School, Point Clear, Alabama

Alabama politicians are hitting the campaign trail again, and a recurrent platform issue is teacher competency. The bandwagon is packed with those shouting for teacher testing. I, too, am concerned about those who will teach my grandchildren, but I am wary of teacher testing as a quick method to address a serious problem, just as I was wary about the scantron forms and stop watch method of teacher evaluation several years ago (disregarded after wasting millions of education dollars).

Perhaps we educators and politicians could seek a more common sense approach—a more responsible "buck stops here" one to borrow an expression from President Truman. Higher standards in the colleges of education must be established with stronger requirements in subject matter. I have read that in some universities the students with the lowest ACT averages are enrolled in the college of education. Graduate work should also emphasize subject matter, not just teaching methods.

Several years ago a disheartening experience jolted me. I was assigned a student teacher in my senior English classes. She was a delightful woman, returning to the classroom while raising her family. She was enthusiastic and related well to students; however, she was poorly prepared in English. In our discussions she expressed her fears and frustrations. She had wanted to become a nurse, but had entered the college of education on the recommendation of her advisor because she could not meet requirements in the college of nursing. What about requirements in education?

Let's leave the rhetoric and the bandwagon, and deal with teacher competency competently. Through higher standards set by the state department and the universities and through imaginative programs for those professionals who want to retrain as teachers, we can have more of the kind of teachers we want to educate our children and grandchildren.

ACTE to You

Peggy Swoger, President

Here is the news from across the state.

ACTE Elections

The ACTE Board of Directors, elected in March, held its initial meeting in April at the home of Sam and Lizette Mitchell. New members of the Board are Mark Barber, from Homewood City schools; Caroline Hamner, from the University of Alabama; Jane Latture, from Jefferson State Junior College in Birmingham; Kayte Melton, from Demopolis High School; John Staik, from Pittman Junior High School; Mary Ann Tighe, from Troy State University; and Debbie West, from the Academy for Science and Foreign Language in Huntsville. Board members are elected to a three-year term and may sit for reelection to a second three-year term, after which they must rotate off the Board for at least one term.

Officers, however, serve a two-year term and may sit for reelection. The 1990-92 officers are President, Peggy Swoger, from Mountain Brook Junior High in Birmingham; Vice-president, Ann Boozer, from the Donoho School in Anniston; Secretary, Barbara Thompson, from the Jim Pearson School in Alexander City; Treasurer, Linda Moore, from the University of Alabama in Birmingham. Chairs of major committees include Martha Wall, Membership Chair; Dorothy Grimes, Publications Chair; Tom Brown, SLATE Chair. Editors of publications are Isabelle Thompson, from Auburn University, Editor of *Alabama English*; and John Staik, from Pittman Junior High, Editor of the newsletter. Willie Mae Crews and Tom Brown will remain as NCTE Directors, and Joe Ross will continue as NCTE Laison. Sam Mitchell will continue as Archivist, and Emil Kaul as Press Officer for SLATE. Sandra Cooper of the Birmingham City system serves as the state coordinator for NCTE's "Promising Young Authors' Program"; and Anne Hamilton of the University of Montevallo is chair of a special task force to revise ACTE's constitution.

Reaching for the Stars Through Collaborative Learning

The ACTE annual fall conference will be held in Huntsville on November 2-3 at the Academy for Science and Foreign Language (the former Hill Davis Elementary School). This K-8 magnet school emphasizes a whole language approach to language arts instruction and is working to fully integrate its curriculum. Teachers at this academy have been trained in collaborative learning techniques and in "Talents Unlimited," a systematic development of students' thinking skills. Ollie Doyle, Principal, attended last year's ACTE conference with several of her teachers and offered to host the 1990 meeting.

This talented faculty will be in charge of Friday night's program, which will begin at 7:30 p.m. Registration for the conference will begin at 6:00 p.m. Debbie West, a teacher at the academy and member of the ACTE Board of Directors, is the chair of the local arrangements committee. Ann Boozer of the Donoho School in Anniston is Chair of the Conference. Contact Ann for further information if you do not receive your newsletter or conference program. Her address is 1002 Forest Lane, Anniston, Alabama 36201. Telephone (205) 238-1854.

Miles Myers, newly appointed Executive Director of NCTE, will be the keynote speaker on Friday. NCTE is expected to undergo a number of substantive changes under Miles' leadership; you don't want to miss this opportunity to hear what's on the mind of the new leadership in our discipline. The conference will also offer workshops in all aspects of teaching English language arts, K-college.

As President of ACTE, I am energized by the spirit of cooperation and active participation I see among members of the Board and among English teachers in all parts of the state. *Deserata* reminds us that "the universe is unfolding as it should," and change is certainly upon us. English language arts instruction is changing, not just for change's sake, but to help students meet the challenges they will face in a very different world of the twenty-first century. This is an exciting time to teach because we are being asked to question our assumptions, methods, and curricula and to be "players" in major school reforms. We are being asked to be leaders in our classrooms and in our schools. Now is the time for us to speak up about class size, working environments, standardized testing, and imposed curricula. It is very important that all of us join in the dialogue of what students should know and be able to do. I hope that ACTE will provide you the leadership that will make this possible.

Call For Manuscripts

Alabama English is seeking manuscripts for publication in its subsequent issues. We are particularly looking for discussions of classroom method and educational philosophy in the teaching of reading, writing, and literature at all grade levels from kindergarten through college. These articles can range in length from 1250 to 4000 words. We also are interested in publishing teaching tips about classroom assignments and essays discussing professional concerns at either a national or a state level. Teaching tips should be 1000 words or less, and essays about professional concerns should be 250 words or less.

All submissions should be typed double space. Please send three copies. If you want your manuscript returned, please enclose a self-addressed mailing envelope with postage attached by a paper clip.

All manuscripts should follow the guidelines in the most recent edition of the *MLA Handbook*.

Submit manuscripts to the following address:

Isabelle Thompson, Editor
Alabama English
Department of English
Auburn University, Alabama 36849

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ALABAMA ENGLISH

Spring 1991 • Volume 3 • Number 1

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ALABAMA ENGLISH

A Publication of the Alabama Council of Teachers of English
in cooperation with Auburn University Extension and Auburn University
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Submissions: Alabama English welcomes manuscripts from 1250 to 4000 words long about current theory and practice in the teaching of reading, writing, and literature at any grade level; manuscripts approximately 1000 words long as "teaching tips"; short poems that are directly related to teaching and other professional experiences; and short essays approximately 250 words long about professional concerns. All manuscripts should be typed double space, and three copies should be submitted. For return of manuscript, enclose a self-addressed envelope with stamps attached by a paper clip. Send submissions to Isabelle Thompson, Editor, *Alabama English*, Department of English, Auburn University, Alabama 36849. Suggestions for book reviews should be sent to the review editors.

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Volume 3 **Number 1** **Spring 1991**

ALABAMA ENGLISH

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Editor's Introduction

Isabelle Thompson

What is education? What is worth knowing? How can teachers invite students to become active participants in the learning process? The articles in this issue of *Alabama English* consider these questions from a number of different viewpoints and across grade levels. These are the questions all of us ask daily regardless of who and where we teach.

In "While We Wait in Alabama" and in "Writing Practice vs. Workbook Drill," Gary and Maryann Manning and Misti McAdams answer these questions with a whole language approach. This view encourages students to "own" their learning processes and products. Proponents of a whole language approach teach reading, writing, listening, speaking, and all other language activities as means to achieve some goal important to the student, not merely as classroom practice. They look at language holistically, not as a set of subskills which can be added together but as a "whole" experience which cannot be broken down into elements.

Confining their comments primarily to college students, Elaine P. Maimon and Lisa M. Schwerdt consider what educated people should know and what should be taught in the English classroom. In her historical survey "The Teaching of Writing in the United States," Maimon says that educated people—good writers and readers—share knowledge of a common body of cultural information, but she also suggests that writing proficiency requires more than a mastery of separate skills and knowledge of discrete facts. For Maimon, both product and process are important. In "Hooray for Hollywood," Lisa M. Schwerdt recommends that texts used in literature and writing courses not be restricted to the Great Books—the canon of literary and philosophical classics which have "stood the test of time." She says we should include film in our canon.

The comment / response column, a new feature in this issue, brings in a variety of viewpoints as the respondents identify and discuss educational issues implied in William C. Taylor's "Where Has Cultural Literacy Gone?" Taylor's comment is a defense of E. D. Hirsch's argument that the goal of education is to "pass on" knowledge of the predominant culture. Like Hirsch, Taylor suggests that educated people share knowledge of a common body of facts—a canon of sorts. Taylor's canon is not restricted to the Great Books, as others such as Allan Bloom would require, but it is concerned with a culture that is primarily white male and that has changed very little since the 1950s. Because of its allegiance to a certain curriculum, this view does not allow much, if any, student choice.

The respondents to Taylor's comment argue for more student choice, a more open canon, or both positions. In

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explaining the background and purpose of the Emphasis on Reading book list, which Taylor criticizes for not including the classics, Nancy Compton Williams and Sandra Lott suggest that elementary and secondary students need literature that addresses their immediate needs—that they can identify with—as well as an acquaintance with the classics. Writing as teachers of literature in the college classroom, Elaine Hughes and Bert Hitchcock address the issue of what should be included in the canon. Hughes argues straightforwardly for the inclusion of contemporary works by women and minorities and for a multimedia approach, while Hitchcock points to the complexity of the selection process and the importance of keeping an open, educated mind about what we teach. Charles Avinger and Mary Beth Culp argue for student choice in reading selections—no matter whether those choices are classic or contemporary works. Finally, in her response, Gloria Solomon addresses questions both about student choice and about the demand for cultural literacy in her response. She suggests incorporating assigned classics into a whole language classroom.

What do you think? Who chooses reading materials in your classroom? On what basis are the selections made? Is there a canon that you feel obligated to pass on to your students? What? Why?

Announcement

National Writing Projects Sites in Alabama

Each of the four National Writing Projects in Alabama will have summer programs. If you are interested in participating, contact one of the site directors below:

Lisa Williams, Director
Jacksonville Writing Project
Jacksonville State University
Jacksonville, Alabama 36265
summer program, June 24-July 25

Richard L. Graves, Director
Sun Belt Writing Project
Auburn University
Auburn University, Alabama 36849
summer program, July 1-August 2

David H. Roberts, Director
Samford Writing Project
Samford University
Birmingham, Alabama 35229
summer program, July 8-August 8

Betsy Dismukes, Director
Wiregrass Writing Project
Troy State University
Troy, Alabama 36082
summer program, June 24-July 25

While We Wait in Alabama

Gary and Maryann Manning

Well-known spokespeople for the whole language approach to literacy, Gary and Maryann Manning are professors at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, where they have taught since 1972. Prior to employment at UAB, Gary was an elementary school teacher and principal and Director of Elementary Education in the Nebraska State Department. Maryann has taught elementary school and high school English and music. The Mannings have published numerous articles in professional journals and four recent books, including Emergent Literacy: A Constructionist View, *due for release soon.*

More than one of five adults in Alabama is functionally illiterate. Too many other adult Alabamians who can read do not find it enjoyable. The situation in writing is even worse. Many adults cannot write while others have difficulty writing clearly and expressively.

In the future, more Alabamians will learn to read and write well and enthusiastically, if educators apply whole language. Goodman et al. describe whole language as "curricula that keep language whole and in the context of its thoughtful use in real situations" (6). There are competent Alabama teachers of reading and writing who have whole language beliefs and are able to use appropriate practices. However, in some schools these whole language teachers are not treated as professionals; they are forced to teach in a way that is not consistent with what they believe. In these schools, teachers feel like workers on an assembly line; they are given basal materials and told they must use them. They are ordered to use such materials when they know how to use a literature-based reading program to develop readers who can and who want to read. They are directed to plow through an English textbook and accompanying workbooks and worksheets when they know how to teach students to write. In other schools, professional teachers are treated as professionals who are expected and able to develop an authentic language curriculum for their students.

Until conditions change, whole language teachers who are not treated as professionals must not become disheartened and give up. They need to realize that they are caught in a *Catch 22.* Understanding of literacy development has accelerated at a faster pace than some educators' professional growth. In addition, breakthroughs in our understanding of literacy development have occurred at a faster rate than administrative edicts, local, state, and federal guidelines, and the American publishing industry. These barriers and others stand in the way of teachers who know how to teach reading and writing. In this article, we address several barriers facing teachers and what they need to do while they wait for the barriers to fall.

Barrier One: State and District Policies

Basal readers and the ancillary materials are expensive. Teachers are automatically given basal readers and the expensive workbooks and other materials that accompany them. When so much money is spent on basal materials, little money is left over for the purchase of real books. Whole language teachers need reading materials including library books, big books, and literature kits. The textbook guidelines at the state and district levels need to be changed so that teachers have a greater voice in the selection of materials. We know teachers in other states who do not want basal materials, especially the expensive ancillary materials. Instead, they use the money they have been allocated to purchase authentic reading materials.

While We Wait

Some Alabama teachers do not use the basal reading materials purchased for their students. Although at times these teachers may have students read selected stories from the basal, they decide what materials they will use and how and when they will use them.

Whole language educators are being vocal in school faculty meetings, district budget hearings, and in other forums. They are saying that basal readers and the ancillary materials are not necessary for a good reading program. Professional organizations need to lobby legislative groups to change textbook laws so that more money can be spent on books instead of the expensive basal materials.

Barrier Two: Segmental Reading Tests

Reading and writing cannot be reduced to isolated skills. Reading is a process of creating meaning from written text. While the statewide standardized reading achievement tests purport to measure reading achievement by using word parts, words in isolation, single sentences, or short paragraphs to assess students' reading ability, they do not measure the actual ability of readers. Like reading, writing is a process. It is a process of expressing thoughts and ideas. Writing ability is not measured by the language portion of a standardized test.

In order to help students do well on the segmental tests, school systems purchase and use materials that are also segmental. In other words, they use materials that teach the test rather than develop readers who comprehend and enjoy reading and writers who express themselves well in writing.

While We Wait

So much attention is given to the standardized achievement test scores that most teachers find it difficult to ignore them. Teachers who do not spend the entire year teaching the isolated skills in workbooks and on worksheets feel that they may be committing professional suicide if their students don't score well on the standardized tests. However, our research studies in Alabama show that students in whole language classrooms do better on the standardized texts than do students of comparable backgrounds in part language classrooms.

Nevertheless, we must work to help policy makers and others to understand that the ability "to bubble" correctly on word parts, grammar and mechanics, and other isolated activities does not necessarily indicate an ability to read or write well. Several other states have changed their assessment program so that it more accurately measures students' literacy. A number of Alabama educators are working to improve Alabama's literacy assessment.

Barrier Three: Skills-Based Curriculum Guides

Most curriculum guides at the state and local levels are skills-based. Teachers who are up-dated in their beliefs about literacy and use instructional practices that reflect their beliefs may not be in compliance with the mandates in the curriculum guide.

While We Wait

Whole language teachers, secure in their understanding and teaching of literacy, demonstrate the effectiveness of whole language curriculum. At the same time, they are working to help other educators realize that many of our curriculum guides are outdated and that literacy cannot be reduced to isolated skills as presented in many of the guides; new guides containing sound literacy beliefs and practices need to be developed.

Barrier Four: Special Programs

Special programs such as Chapter One and Learning Disabilities serve children who have learning difficulties. In many instances, these programs are skills-based and interfere with children's literacy development rather than support it.

While We Wait

Whole language educators are encouraging Chapter One and other federal program personnel to move from a part language view of reading and writing to a whole language view. Whole language teachers in federal programs realize that troubled readers often become more troubled in a part language curriculum. Their successes in developing readers and writers are causing other teachers and administrators to review and evaluate the part language curriculum of special programs. Whole language classroom teachers and special program teachers are working together to develop more meaningful reading and writing programs for the special student.

Barrier Five: Poor Staff Development

Some of the staff development in schools is outdated and not related to professional concerns. For instance, several whole language teachers have told us that they have attended staff development sessions that were completely contradictory to what they know about children's literacy development. The sessions focused on isolated skills, giving suggestions about becoming a more proficient skills-based teacher.

While We Wait

Whole language teachers are demanding staff development that reflects good literacy theory and provides sound directions for instruction. In the more enlightened schools in our state, teachers volunteer to serve on or chair committees that plan and implement staff development that shows we are in the exciting decade of the 1990s. They work with professional organizations and professionals from other schools to provide appropriate and relevant sessions for improving literacy programs.

Conclusion

We have touched on a few of the barriers confronting whole language teachers in Alabama. We offered a few suggestions for coping with the barriers and for trying to remove them. Our intent in writing this article was to support professionally competent Alabama teachers and administrators who are implementing a whole language curriculum for their students. Their literate students are the real beneficiaries of whole language which is rooted in a long history of child-centered curricula. With time and effort, better literacy programs will prevail in Alabama.

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My Professional Concern

Mary Ann Rygiel
Auburn High School, Auburn, Alabama

Every February we practice for tornadoes by going out into the hall and having our students sit with their spines against the walls or cold metal lockers and their knees drawn up. Why is this teacher concerned about a once-a-year tornado drill?

The answer is that I am terrified at the ensuing deconstructionist chaos the whirling winds of the storm would wreak on my classroom management systems. Visualize the black funnel of whirling papers (about 25 grades per 133 students per quarter), textbook cards (1 card per student with vital irreplaceable information on the book number of a literature book, a grammar/writer, and seven outside readings—according to the office's stern policy manual for teachers, I would be held personally responsible for paying for these 9 books per student), and the books themselves. The angular corners of the hard books jut menacingly and randomly at students and teachers alike. The lighter tomes like the 400-page soft-cover *Mutiny on the Bounty* fly up towards the top of the funnel. An engineer should calculate the velocity and force of this paper storm.

What happens when this awful storm subsides? Teachers and students survey the dismal scene and decide, in the spirit of Boxer, the hero of *Animal Farm*: "We will work harder. The paper mill must be rebuilt."

Writing Practice vs. Workbook Drill: Teaching Skills in a Meaningful Way

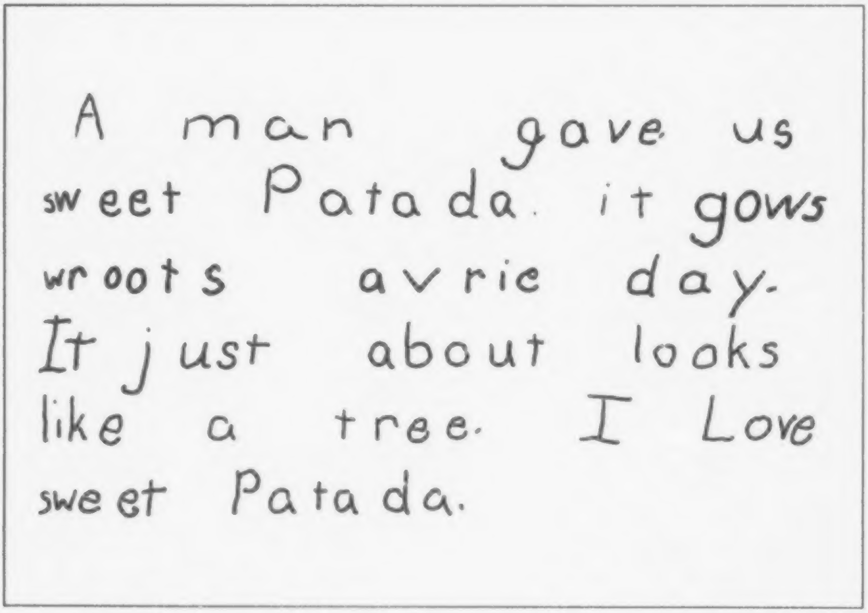
Misti McAdams

Misti Whitson McAdams graduated from the University of Alabama at Birmingham, as Outstanding Undergraduate of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction and the Division of Elementary Education. During her first year of teaching, she received national recognition as a Sallie Mae First Year Teacher. She is presently teaching first grade at Pinson Elementary in Jefferson County.

Traditionally, teachers have been creatures of habit, using daily routines. It is only natural for people to feel secure when they know exactly what steps to follow. Maybe the security and the predictability of the patterns are why workbook drills have become such a popular method of instruction, but a child can no more learn to write by drilling workbook skills than an adult can learn to put together a stereo by drawing pictures of the parts in a booklet.

Research has shown that children learn more quickly and thoroughly when the material is presented in a meaningful context. Margaret Phinney explains: "In fact, their [children's] learning is more governed by impact than logic. They remember the meaningful, the outstanding and the useful first, and those are all determined by personal interest and purpose." For example, a child will remember how to use a period, not necessarily when the class gets to this mark of punctuation in the workbook, but when it is important to him or her to know its proper use. During the "Daily News" time in my first grade class, we discussed the proper use of periods several times, but Laura's writing reflected no knowledge of the material reviewed. It was only when the period became relevant to her that she remembered its use. She came to me for a conference during our writing time one afternoon: "I want my book to have a bunch of sentences just like other books do," she informed me. As I explained the use of a period once again, she listened attentively. I could see her brain in motion; she blinked her eyes in an effort to understand. I have no doubt that she will remember how to use a period because at that point she had a need. The need was not present when the class reached that particular chapter in the workbook but when the period was relevant and meaningful to her as a writer. Laura's writing is shown on the next page.

Other language skills are also better taught through writing practice as opposed to drill in a traditional

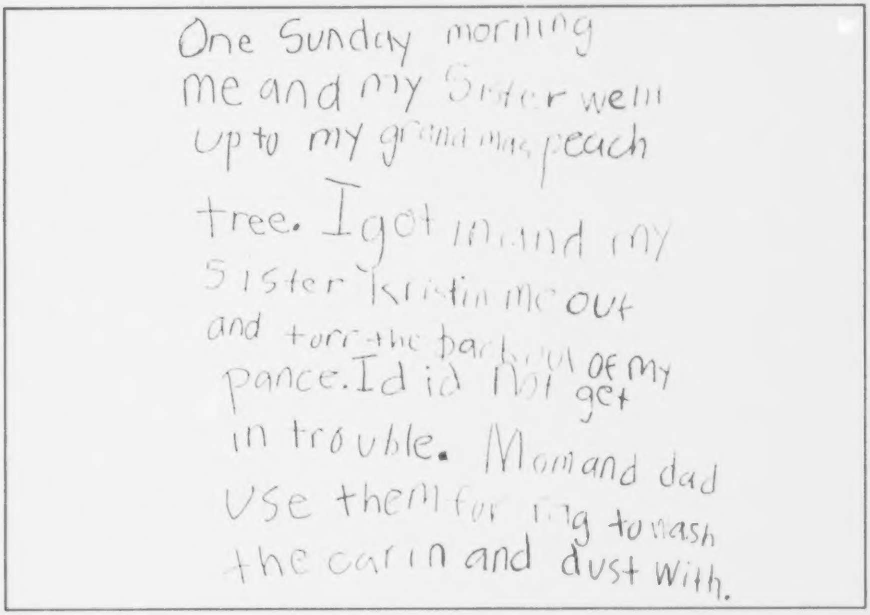


A man gave us
sweet Patada. it gows
wroots avric day.
It just about looks
like a tree. I Love
sweet Patada.

Laura learned how to use periods because she wanted her writing to look professional.

workbook. Most first graders, even if they are not avid readers, realize the relationship between pictures and printed material. They strive to make their personal writing look like that in professionally printed books. Anna's piece of writing, shown on the next page, provides a good example. Like Laura, she learned to use capitalization, punctuation, correct sentence structure, and correct spelling, but not through workbook exercises. She learned them in a way that was meaningful to her. It was important to her that her writing be like that in one of the books found in our class library. It was important that she spell correctly and write correctly because other people would be reading her work. Through personal conferences and modeling professionally printed books, she achieved her goal.

Through writing practice, very important skills along with correctness are taught. Children learn critical thinking as well as communication skills. We as adults know that these are two of the life threads that ensure our very existence. These two essential skills cannot be mastered by completing exercises in a workbook. Children must look at the overall message as well as the individual components of their writing. They can learn to ask questions of themselves and of their writing: "Does this say what I want it to say? Do these words paint the picture that I want them to paint? If not, how can I change them so that they will?" In workbook



One Sunday morning
me and my Sister went
up to my grandmas peach
tree. I got in and my
sister Kristin me out
and torr the back out of my
pance. Id id Not get
in trouble. Mom and dad
use them for rag to wash
the car in and dust with.

Like Laura, Anna learned to follow the rules of English transcription because she wanted to write like a book.

exercises, children are drilled on a specific use of a particular rule that works only when a certain set of circumstances exists. In writing practice, varied and very unique circumstances exist. Children develop a working knowledge of the skills. Children learn because they "own" these circumstances. In their writing they have ownership, with the situation and the solution evolving solely around them. Thus the writing and the learning are purposeful and relevant to their everyday lives. The story created comes with their own thoughts and actions, not that of irrelevant characters in a workbook.

Personal growth cannot be measured through performance on workbook exercises, but it is always obvious in writing. A child may appear to master a skill today in a workbook exercise, but he or she may not be able to use that same skill in a month or two. Shown on page 9, Adam's writing provides a case in point. The first sample was written in September. We had studied a unit on memories, reading several books on the topic. Even though his words are not discernable, Adam obviously grasped the concept being taught. As the drawing indicates, memories can often make us happy, but they can also make us sad. For example, thinking about what we did with a dead grandparent makes us smile, but missing the grandparent makes us cry. The second sample was done by the same child in January. Although Adam's writing is far from perfect, the individual growth in spelling, punctuation, and sentence

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structure and the development of communication and inductive thinking skills are phenomenal! Adam is now capable of reading the product and able to share it with others. This accomplishment instills a feeling of pride, and this success immediately breeds a positive self concept.

The children in my first grade class can be described best in the way Estelle Korengold describes one of her children in "Putting Phonics in Its Place":

> "Teacher, I just love school! I can read and I love it!"
> In my class we all knew he was reading and writing. And he was not alone. All his classmates considered themselves readers and writers. They knew some were better than others, but all of them were confident in their ability.

Teaching skills through writing practice seems much more efficient, effective, and fun than teaching skills in isolation. This philosophy of teaching writing can best be summed up in this quote by a teacher-parent:

> As a parent I knew we didn't teach children to talk in bits and pieces. They learned to talk by listening and talking with some help from adults. So it seemed logical that the best way to learn to read and write was by reading and writing with guidance.

If children become fluent speakers and communicators in this manner, it seems logical that they become fluent readers and writers by reading and writing.

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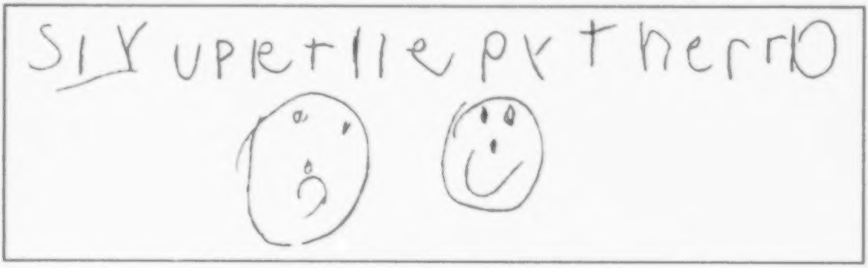
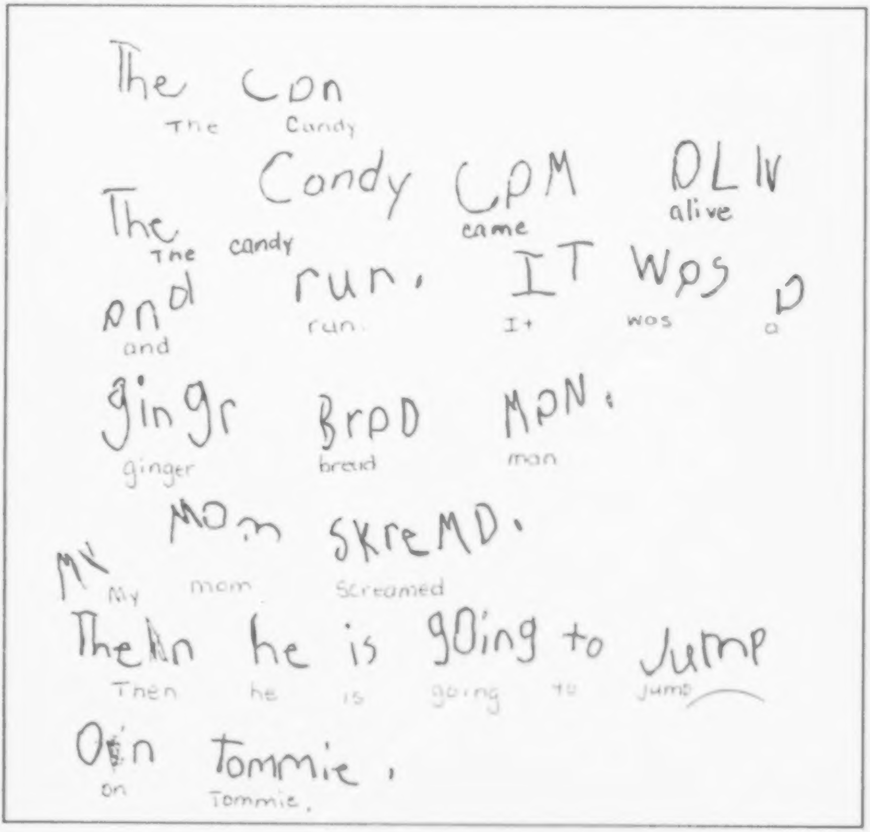


SIY uPletlle pY therrO

In the first sample, Adam relies on pictures rather than words to get his point across.



The Con
The Candy

The Candy CoM OLV
The candy came alive

and run. IT Wos a
and run. It wos a

gingr BroD MoN.
ginger bread man

My MOm skreMD.
My mom Screamed

Thean he is going to Jump
Then he is going to jump

On Tommie.
on Tommie.

In the second sample, written only a few months later, Adam uses words.

My Professional Concern

Peggy Jolly
University of Alabama at Birmingham, Birmingham, Alabama

My professional concern deals with abundance rather than dearth: too many students in writing classrooms. Although NCTE guidelines suggest that no more than 20 students should be placed in a composition class, my school routinely enrolls 28 students in each class, more if graduation is quickly approaching, other classes are full, or the student has priorities such as basketball practice that preclude a flexible schedule. The maximum enrollment has become the "optional" enrollment.

This abundance produces a wealth of writing for the teacher to respond to. This wealth results in a shortfall for the student. An experienced teacher needs approximately 20 minutes to respond adequately to a student's piece of writing, to understand the student's purpose, to discern an organizational appropriateness, to determine adequacy of support and development, to check for standard usage. With a class of 28 students, the teacher is committed to 9 1/2 hours of reading for each writing project assigned. Since writers' skills improve with practice and since a writing task should ideally move through three or more drafts before it is abandoned, each writing assignment will cost the teacher an additional 30 hours in response time. During a term, assuming students write an average of half a dozen papers, the instructor's work load just for reading-responding is 4 1/2 weeks; that, of course, is in addition to the time spent in classroom preparation and presentation.

This abundance increases frustration for the teacher. It often results in fewer assignments, causing limited progress for the students. The abundance produces dearth.

Reducing the number of students in composition classes would result in less frustration for the instructor, more progress for the students. English teachers are notoriously demeaned for their mathematical aptitude, but in this case they are precisely accurate: less would produce more.

The Teaching of Writing in the United States: Democracy and Diversity

Elaine P. Maimon

Reprinted from *Mesure*

Elaine P. Maimon is Dean of Experimental Programs and Professor of English at Queens College/CUNY. She has also served as Associate Dean of the College at Brown University and Associate Vice President and professor of English at Beaver College, where she created, initiated, and administered one of the nation's first programs in writing across the curriculum. She holds a BA, MA, and PhD in English from the University of Pennsylvania. Professor Maimon's publications include Writing in the Arts and Sciences, Readings in the Arts and Sciences, Thinking, Reasoning, and Writing, *and numerous essays and articles. In this article, originally published in a French journal, Maimon discusses recent developments in writing instruction in the United States.*

It is a little ironic to be invited to report to readers of *Mesure* about the teaching of writing in the United States, when so much that we characterize as reform in the field has been inspired by practices long taken for granted in France. A recent article (February 1989) in the *English Journal*, the major secondary school publication of the National Council of Teachers of English, entitled, "Why Francois Knows How to Write," reports: ". . . young people do not graduate from French high schools unless they can demonstrate proficiency in writing" (Fowler).

Young people do, in fact, graduate from schools in the United States without demonstrating proficiency in writing. One reason is that the United States honors its democratic commitment to educate the majority of its people in ways still reserved in Europe for an elite. Many students who in France would have been directed at the end of seventh grade into vocational education continue in the United States into high school and often into college. Schools and colleges here undertake the education of a remarkable racial, economic, social, and ethnic diversity of students. In addition, decision-making power in public schools is wielded by locally elected school boards.

But even taking these Jeffersonian principles and the resulting variety in practice into account, the United States does not present an historical record of commitment to the teaching of writing. This lack of commitment is difficult to understand in light of the definitive significance of the written word in American culture. The identity of the United States itself is defined historically by a foundational text: the United States Constitution. The schools, nonetheless, have not affirmed the teaching of writing as their indisputable mission.

In contrast, French schools have a longstanding reputation for giving writing a high priority from first grade on and in all divisions of the curriculum. The French system of national essay examinations motivates all academic teachers, not just secondary teachers of French, to prepare students to write effectively and fluently.

This infusion of rhetoric across the curriculum in France has long been taken for granted. It may be surprising to learn that the situation has been otherwise in the United States. Rhetoric has not been consistently perceived for what it is—fundamental to learning and to communicating ideas. One of the major "advances" in the teaching of writing in the schools and colleges in the United States has been "writing across the curriculum," a movement that emphasizes the role of writing in all disciplines, including mathematics. Such emphasis is hardly a revelation in France, where students have long been expected to explain in writing the procedures they have used to solve problems.

Writing across the curriculum in the United States was influenced by the republication by the National Council of Teachers of English in 1963 and again in 1965 of a book entitled, *How the French Boy Learns to Write* by Rollo Brown, an American observer who visited France in 1915. Brown describes the important place that writing holds in the routine of the French school:

> First, it matters not in what classroom a small boy may be seen, he is never without his general notebook, in which he records all assignments, all problems, all experiments, all quotations to be learned, all geographical and historical notes and maps, as well as many special exercises. . . . (46)

In the 1960s, when Brown's observations were re-published, students in the United States at all levels of instruction were not receiving this continuous practice in writing. Whereas the French schoolboy learned to perform written work "in a perfectly normal frame of mind," American students viewed writing as artificial in the sense of not being a natural component of learning experiences. Much of the reform in the teaching of writing in the United States can be described as normalizing and integrating the activity of writing into the general process of learning and thinking.

Coincident with the 1963 reprinting of *How the French Boy Learns to Write* was the publication of *Themes, Theories, and Therapies: The Teaching of Writing in College*, Albert Kitzhaber's report on the teaching of writing at Dartmouth College. Professor Kitzhaber found that the writing of upperclassmen, even at an elite college like Dartmouth, exhibited a clear pattern of backsliding after freshman English. Citing *How the French Boy Learns to Write*, Kitzhaber called for more sensible classroom practices that would involve students in writing projects through conversation with classmates and friends. Kitzhaber's most influential conclusion was that the integration of writing instruction into a variety of courses was the only way to help students to make the necessary connection between the ability to verbalize new knowledge and general intellectual development. "The behavior patterns involved in writing well," wrote Kitzhaber, "are so numerous, so complex, so much a part of all the other aspects of a student's intellectual life that these patterns must be constantly reinforced during all a student's years of schooling if they are to become habitual"(100-01).

Kitzhaber's study is one exemplary document among many others that define the 1960s as a pivotal decade in the teaching of writing in the United States. Although many teachers of writing in the schools and in the colleges continued to reduce writing instruction to spelling and punctuation alone, the best informed members of the profession joined Kitzhaber in affirming connections between writing and thinking. Some looked to classical rhetoric for a tradition connecting thought and expression. The rediscovery of classical rhetoric in its application to the teaching of writing is evidenced in a key textbook published in 1965, Edward P.J. Corbett's *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*. Others proposed a "new rhetoric," one more appropriate to an age of print, when writing as a generative process needs new emphasis. The first textbook to link the new rhetoric to pedagogy is the aptly titled, *Rhetoric: Discovery and Change*, by Richard Young, Alton Becker, and Kenneth Pike.

The new rhetoricians, like classical rhetoricians, were concerned with invention, arrangement, and style. But their primary concern was with writing as a process of discovery. The schools had long taught only the communicative function of writing. Rhetoricians, both new and classical, set out to redress this imbalance by emphasizing the heuristic function. Writing became viewed by scholars of rhetoric as central to self-discovery, understanding, creativity, and connection.

In this light, punctuation and spelling can be identified as surface features, necessary to control when communicating publicly, but by no means sufficiently comprehensive to form a full curriculum for the teaching of writing. A shift began in the 1960s from pedagogical preoccupation with correcting a finished product to understanding and assisting the process of composition.

This new interest in the process of writing was extended in the next decade by researchers who reported on first-hand observations of student writers at work. In the 1970s research done in England by James Britton in the Schools Council project was published in the United States. This close observation of the writing habits of British young people, reported in *The Development of Writing Abilities (11-18)*, revealed that actual behavior was often at odds with textbook maxims.

In the United States, Janet Emig undertook a similar project which resulted in her influential monograph, *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders*. Her case studies of students identified as successful writers revealed that their actual practices differed significantly from textbook advice. Their behavior as writers conformed, in fact, more closely to the processes used by established writers, who also had managed to escape from the useless directives too often prevalent in the schools.

Emig concluded, "Much of the teaching of composition in American high schools is essentially a neurotic activity." Teachers conventionally insisted on detailed preliminary outlines; few established writers or successful students, if left to their own devices, willingly produced such outlines. Teachers taught error avoidance to the point of discouraging inexperienced writers to put pen to paper.

Emig also chided teachers for assigning a particularly American form of writing, one that I am sorry to say still prevails in the schools even as we approach the *fin de siecle*. This form is the five-paragraph theme, "the Fifty-Star Theme," as Emig called it, to identify its peculiarly American nature: one paragraph introduces what will be said; three paragraphs expand and exemplify the introductory thesis; and the last paragraph concludes, reiterating what was said at first. The teachers whom Emig interviewed defended the five-paragraph theme because they wished to prepare students for assignments in college freshman composition. And indeed five-paragraph themes were assigned then and, to a lesser degree, are assigned now in the colleges—hardly a good reason to perpetuate something that is found nowhere outside the walls of a classroom. More curious was the belief, dominant in 1971 and still not finally laid to rest, that professional writers compose five-paragraph themes. One of the most important contributions of Emig's monograph was the light she shed on the diverse practices of established writers, among whom not one had ever produced a five-paragraph theme.

In *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders* and in a later article, "Writing as a Mode of Learning," Emig emphasizes writing as a way to learn, not only as a way to communicate. When students write, they are by necessity active rather than passive. They are compelled to integrate ideas and information at least at some level. Because the learner has made a written record, the act of writing allows for review, rethinking, and reimagining.

When teachers use writing as a mode of learning, students gain an added advantage. Through consistent practice integrated with the learning of subject matter, students have many opportunities to develop fluency. Fluency may not be a sufficient condition for effective written communication, but it is a necessary condition. The more students write, the more they habituate themselves to writing in "a perfectly normal frame of mind."

The subjects of Emig's study were all motivated students; six of the eight were characterized by teachers as "good" writers and the other two, although not described as talented writers, were still identified as interested in writing. The 1970s was also a decade when thousands of underprepared students, some of whom were considered illiterate by conventional standards, were admitted to the City University of New York (CUNY) under a policy called Open Admissions. Besides the idealism and commitment to social justice implicit in this policy, one of its most significant consequences was to open "a new intellectual frontier" in the teaching of writing (Bruffee). Confronted by students whose backgrounds differed radically from their own, college instructors were compelled to examine fundamental assumptions about thinking, writing, and the relationship between the two.

Some CUNY professors became guardians at the gate, directing their energies to keeping the barbarians out. And indeed the Open Admissions policy was short lived, ending in 1976. Those professors, however, who took up the challenge during that period, redirecting their research from literature to literacy, formed a circle around an inspirational teacher at City College, Mina Shaughnessy. Shaughnessy's book, *Errors and Expectations*, continues as a fountainhead for further research and as a model of cross-disciplinary scholarship. The Shaughnessy circle learned from their own collaboration that classroom practices that involve conversation and exchange could be more effective than the model of professor as lecturer / students as passive receptors.

Another of Shaughnessy's enlightening insights was a new way of regarding error in writing. Before her influential work, *gaffes* in grammar and spelling were regarded as signs of incompetence, ignorance, and ineducability. Shaughnessy searched for the "intelligence" behind students' mistakes and sought to harness that intelligence in the service of learning. She regarded the Open Admissions students as beginners, as basic writers, even though most of them entered the City University after 12 years of public schooling. She realized that like all beginners, basic writers must learn by making mistakes. Error in writing can be a window to a student's thinking process, if a sympathetic teacher can regard the mistake not as a linguistic sin but as a step in learning the written language.

Shaughnessy's attitude toward error was influenced by techniques long used in foreign language instruction. When English speakers study French, for example, enlightened teachers do not punish or ridicule every grammatical lapse. If a learner writes, "Je suis faim," rather than "j'ai faim," the teacher understands that the beginner is struggling with interference from English linguistic patterns. The patient instructor tries to encourage the student to write and speak rather than to remain silent. Silence is after all the single most effective way to avoid errors, and instruction based on error-avoidance will often evoke this efficiency. Shaughnessy's approach to error encourages native speakers to break the tense silence that comes from preoccupation with error.

At the same time, Shaughnessy does not adopt an attitude of *laissez-faire* toward error. She understands that basic writers sometimes find the fear of error to be an insurmountable barrier to communicating publicly in formal English. Even worse, their propensity toward mistakes keeps them from using writing as a mode of learning because they lack any sense of control over the written language. Shaughnessy calls upon teachers to look for the logic behind students' mistakes in order to determine appropriate points for instruction. She understands that writers must control their language so that they can generate ideas and effectively communicate to others. "That errors carry messages that writers can't afford to send is demonstrated," Shaughnessy writes, "by the amount of energy and money individuals, business firms, publishing houses, etc., spend on error removal, whether by correcting fluids, erasers, scrapped paper, or proofreaders" (12).

Because she views writing as a means of enfranchisement, Shaughnessy's ultimate concern is political. Throughout the 1980s, the political point of her work has been widely influential. Unfortunately, her careful analysis of errors in writing has been overshadowed in the scholarly community by the false dichotomy between process and product in writing. Enlightened writing teachers in the 1980s emphasize the writing process, but in their zeal to redress years of preoccupation with surface features, some have forgotten Shaughnessy's lessons about helping students to control the niceties of their public writing.

Exemplary of Shaughnessy's ongoing political influence is a document published in 1989, *The English Coalition Conference: Democracy through Language*, the subtitle clearly referring to issues of enfranchisement and empowerment. This manifesto was first drafted in the summer of 1987 during a three-week conference of all the important American organizations devoted to writing instruction at all levels of education, kindergarten through graduate school: the Modern Language Association, the National Council of Teachers of English, the Association of Departments of English, the College English Association, the College Language Association, the Conference of Secondary School English Department Chairs, and the Conference on English Education.

The fact that representatives from these diverse and often competing associations lived together for three weeks and produced a single document is in itself remarkable. Also noteworthy is the clear and positive emphasis on writing as a mode of learning and on writing as a fundamental means to achieve democratic goals. Students must become "active learners," who "make meaning—rather than merely consume information" (x). Students must be encouraged to connect what they are learning in the schools. When the language of the schools differs significantly from the language to which they are exposed informally, then these active connections between the familiar and the unfamiliar become even more significant.

The consensus achieved by the English Coalition was in part a reaction to a challenge issued at the opening plenary session by Chester E. Finn, Jr., then assistant secretary for research and improvement, US Department of Education. In an address entitled, "Literature vs. Literacy," Finn called for a repudiation of the "skills movement" (by which he meant the process movement) in favor of teaching information. Finn's inspiration was E. D. Hirsch, Jr.'s *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*, with its list of nearly 5000 "cultural literacy" terms. Hirsch insists that students will not become effective readers or writers unless they bring to any text a body of information that all literate people are assumed to know. Participants in the English Coalition Conference, reflecting the view of most of their university and school colleagues, rejected the idea that abstracted lists of inert information were educationally fundamental.

Hirsch's concept of cultural literacy was hardly illuminated by its association with Chester Finn, identified as a mouthpiece for William Bennett, the reactionary Secretary of Education, who was identified in the participants' minds with exclusivity in education, not enfranchisement. As a consequence, when Hirsch himself spoke later at the conference, some valuable points may have been missed.

Unlike Allan Bloom, with whom Hirsch's name is often erroneously associated, Hirsch is not a political reactionary or even a conservative. Hirsch's fixation on lists of names and dates emerges from a democratic instinct to familiarize all readers and writers in the United States with what Hirsch sees as the intellectual coin of the realm. Because writing always refers to other pieces of writing, Hirsch proposes that a student's written response to a piece of reading will be dependent on the student's store of background information. Because this nation is so diverse, many students enter school without a common body of information to provide points of reference in reading and writing. Without such common knowledge, young people whose home culture is different from that of the majority are at a disadvantage. Hirsch wants everybody to have a chance to join the national conversation.

Hirsch's democratic commitments would be better understood if he were not perceived as playing into the hands of an conservative national government that seeks easy, inexpensive solutions to immense problems in education. A curriculum based on consuming Hirsch's lists seems easier to implement than the English Coalition's "making of meaning." Hirsch's ideas might have been better accepted by teachers if he had called for stories rather than lists. Certainly, elementary and secondary school students will become better readers and writers if they can join a communal narrative.

Richard Rorty, in his interpretation of Hirsch, calls for an "inculcation of this narrative of freedom and hope," one that would help children in the United States "to think of themselves as proud and loyal citizens of a country which, slowly and painfully, threw off a foreign yoke, freed its slaves, enfranchised its women, restrained its robber barons and licensed its trade unions, liberalized its religious practices and broadened its religious and moral tolerance, and built colleges in which 50 percent of its population could enroll—a country which had numbered Jefferson, Thoreau, Susan B. Anthony, Eugene Debs, Woodrow Wilson, Walter Reuther, FDR, Rosa Parks, and James Baldwin among its citizens" (13).

These are names and stories that many young readers and writers in the United States do not know. And they should. But fierce arguments about canons and exclusivity have created vexed academic politics surrounding any discussion of required curricula, texts, or assignments. Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* complicates the discussion even further. Bloom, the political reactionary, would solve the problems of American education by reducing the population attending American colleges only to clones of himself and his peers. Bloom says nothing at all about elementary or secondary education, but in his prescriptions for the college curriculum, he insists upon a canon of Great Books of the Western tradition. Since most American academics are political liberals, even the Great Books themselves have suffered by association with Bloom. Furthermore, the habit of book reviewers to lump Hirsch and Bloom together made it nearly impossible for many to see any merit in *Cultural Literacy*. Few have heeded Hirsch's reminder to connect the process of writing with a communal body of information and ideas.

The English Coalition takes the position that the skills / content debate rests on a false dichotomy. "Learning inevitably unites skills and content in a dynamic process of practice and assimilation." The one publication of the Coalition (others are to follow) is noncommittal on the specifics of content. Readers are advised that students should "read widely in both traditional literature and literature that reflects the diversity of American culture, and that they become familiar with as many different kinds of writing as possible (nonfiction as well as fiction, poetry, and drama)" (xxiii). All more particular choices are left to local communities and teachers. With the approval of the English Coalition then, an American student could graduate from high school and then from college without ever reading and writing about the Declaration of Independence or about the United States Constitution.

As we enter the 1990s, writing instruction in the United States is diversely implemented. Based on the continuing sales of textbooks that could have been written in the 1950s, we can regretfully say that too many English teachers in the schools and colleges are still teaching the "five-paragraph theme" through the methodology of error avoidance. Those who constitute the leadership among English teachers, however, demonstrate in their practice and in their publications a commitment to the following principles and attitudes:

- writing is a complex process related to thinking and learning
- all young people and all adults returning to school are entitled to instruction in writing
- writing should be integrated into the teaching of subject matter across the curriculum
- classroom practices should be collaborative and consultative, involving students interactively in the learning process
- "correctness" and manuscript neatness are important social considerations in writing but these concerns must not, as the English Coalition report says, "dilute the concentration on writing as a means to learn"
- writing instruction should be integrated with speaking, listening, and reading

Although scholars in the field of English call for the integration of writing with reading, emphasis on the writing process and social commitments to educational diversity have led to so much openness on what should be read that process does predominate over product, methodologies over concepts. Since the 1963 re-publication of *The French Boy Learns to Write,* composition has developed into an emerging academic field. According to Stephen North's account, it is a field in which concepts and principles are most usefully derived from practice. Yet practice in this heterogeneous nation is so various as to risk becoming chaotic and indescribable. The commitment to democracy, which is a strength of writing instruction here, is also its weakness.

Economic factors also play a significant role. The public schools in the United States are funded from local property taxes. Richard Rorty points to "an increasingly greedy and heartless American middle class" that permits "the quality of education a child receives to become proportional to the assessed value of its parents' real estate" (12). At the universities, too, writing instruction is frequently relegated to the most junior and poorly paid members of the academy, often on part-time assignment. As Mike Rose says, "our educational ideals far outstrip our economic and political priorities" (188). Under Reagan and Bush, these disjunctions have become even more problematic.

Educators in the United States in the 1990s still have much to learn from France. French teachers have never forgotten that instruction in writing must be integrated with teaching and learning at all levels. Wrenching writing instruction out of its context creates conflicts, inefficiencies, and false dichotomies.

The reform movement in writing instruction that began in the United States in the 1960s has helped us to apply principles that the French have long incorporated into instruction. But the challenge in the United States is far greater than in France because of the American commitment to educate everyone in the exercise of higher cognitive capacities. In Europe, such education has traditionally been reserved to a ruling class. According to Jeffersonian democracy, everyone who votes is a member of the ruling class and must therefore be educated to reason and to write.

Such principles are expensive so the public looks for easy, less costly answers. In defiance, the community of educators rejects the possibility of national consensus and abandons education to the local school boards that financially short-change national educational ideals. Such is the state of writing instruction in the United States, at least as this one practitioner-observer sees it: rich but sometimes powerless in its diversity.

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Hooray for Hollywood: Film in the Classroom

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"The literacy crisis" is a phrase that seems to have been with us forever. Everyone and everything has come in for part of the blame, from incompetent teachers and divorced parents to red dye No. 2 and fluorescent lighting. More recently, we've encountered "computer literacy," a term which somehow strikes me as oxymoronic. Perhaps we have been too interested in *what* students read rather than in their developing critical skills—without which the ability to read is simply wasted. I believe if students were more critical of what they consumed—be it television, movies, or books—the literacy crisis would, in large measure, be solved. For it is not just a question of being able to read and write words; students do read driver instruction manuals and they do write love letters. It is a problem of being able to perceive and to create meaning. I'd like to propose that we take advantage of a communicative medium our students invest hours of time in—one that will result not in a "watering down" of the curriculum, but in a "trickle up" effect—the Hollywood film industry.

I suggest films because they essentially imitate books. They both have stories to tell from the perspective of a narrator. I could also have suggested the television industry or even the music industry if I'd wanted to concentrate on smaller units of meaning such as metaphors or even rhyming words. But I choose film because of its popularity and its ready availability since the advent of video cassettes. I believe that literature is necessary, important, and worthwhile, and I think we can often get students to more fully appreciate, understand, and enjoy the complexities of novels by approaching them through film and its *apparent* ease.

Let me first say that I am not advocating simply showing a film and having the students read the book. While such a procedure can certainly give them a "feel" for historical time periods and also entertain them, it does little for teaching them how to read or understand. I am advocating deliberate instruction in "film literacy" as an adjunct to students learning how to communicate. In combining literature and film we can, in fact, expand our students' knowledge of communication systems, create more discriminating readers and viewers, and for those of you concerned that there be some demonstrable "product" from all this, further the students' composition skills. All three elements will give our students a broader base from which to confront our exploding information era.

We all know what skills we expect students to use in reading fine literature. Watching a movie requires them to exercise similar skills. Films are much like books in that they have a recognizable structure: exposition which gives the background information needed, the development of that situation, a conflict, a digression or sub-plot, a climax, and a resolution. In analyzing a film, then, students are required: 1) to cite specifics; 2) to relate individual parts to the whole; 3) to construct a logical defense of their reaction; 4) to articulate values for making aesthetic judgments; and 5) to understand the limitations and powers of visual language. Analyzing a film is a bit more complicated than merely discussing it and requires students to be clear, concise, and thoughtful. They must be able to identify and state the importance of specific points and sections in the film, based on an overall concept (be it the film's or their own) and to understand what a film can do as well as what it cannot.

This understanding provides the first opportunity for discussing the students' obligation in approaching film or literature. They need to understand that they cannot expect a book to do what a movie does and vice versa. One is not "better" than another—simply different. If you have the time, you can probably elicit the differences and similarities between them in class discussion. You can point out that both are similar in that they tell stories using details and from the perspective of a narrator. Here are some obvious differences:

	film	novel
1.	can show exactly	can show indirectly
2.	must be specific	can be fantastic
3.	can be entirely new	draws upon what reader knows
4.	adds an aural component	may add an aural component
5.	viewer does little work	reader does most work
6.	suggests things	suggests feelings and sensations
7.	mass response	individualized response
8.	literal, concrete, explicit	figurative, abstract, ambiguous
9.	expensive	cheap
10.	ephemeral	long-lasting
11.	created to make money	created to express an impulse

The main difference between the two is that your brain simply works harder with a novel: you must decode symbols; you don't see directly, but must imagine what's happening; and you must remember more and longer since a book usually requires more time. This seeming hardship, however, also makes the novel more personal and gives you more power. To a certain extent a reader creates the meaning in a book—or at least, more so than a viewer of a film.

These points can then be developed and expanded in discussing the strengths and limitations of each medium (see Monaco):

film	novel
1. operates in "real" time, so is limited	can end anytime, so is unlimited
2. everything in the set is seen	authors cannot describe everything, so what they describe is filtered through their language, prejudices, and point of view
3. tension between materials of the story and objective nature of the visual image	tension between materials of the story (plot, character, setting, theme) and narration of it in language
4. chance plays a larger part and observer is free to participate more actively	incidents must be prepared for
5. persona of narrator is weak (difficult to film only what narrator sees)	strong persona
6. In some respects, film has to be simpler and ensure that the audience will understand the conventions used because it has to be apprehended and comprehended in a single setting	you can go back for what has been missed
7. direct event (requires no intervening objects and leaves nothing behind except in memory)	indirect event

A grasp of these elements will help students understand why a writer "talks so much" and "goes on and on" or why point of view is so important in a novel. Such terms as "point of view," "plot," "setting," or "theme" can be used with both literature and film, but there are a few terms specifically used in describing the elements of a film (see Jinks). These terms will help students break the film down into parts and allow for easier analysis. Discussing the film may occasion some uneasiness about whether students are doing anything important. But as long as you encourage developed and thoughtful responses, students will, in fact, be very busy marshalling evidence to support their views. They will also learn something about interpretive decisions through examination of casting decisions, for example.

So far, I've primarily discussed what might be considered "internal" changes, that is, new ways of seeing and understanding, and with the result, I hope, that students feel more aware and in control of the material and therefore not intimidated by books. You might, for example, have them read a book and then cast it, or select filming locations in the community. An additional benefit is that students may also become more critical of what they see on the silver-screen.

Film can also be used to further writing skills. You can examine both process and product using film as the starting point. You can ask students to look at the various modes of discourse which film uses: 1) its narration (How does it tell the story? How is time noted?); 2) its exposition (What is the point of view?); 3) its argument (What does it say? What is its bias?); and 4) its description (Is it a documentary? How is the emotion conveyed? Does it use certain camera angles often?). In effect, you are asking students to focus on how a shift in any one of these elements would change our understanding—a perfect lead-in to a discussion of the importance of audience in writing.

You can also ask students to use certain composition skills in writing about what they've seen. Before their analysis begins, they will use narration and description to recount what happened in the film. Their discussion of the use of specifics or the relationship of the parts to the whole will require them to use exposition. Their use of exposition to prove a point, in turn, allows them to deal with argument.

Finally, you can bring literature, film, and composition together if you have students read a novel, watch the film made from it, and then write about either or both. There are many film adaptations available—from *Wuthering Heights*, *Great Expectations*, and *The Grapes of Wrath*, to *Fahrenheit 451*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, and *Slaughterhouse-5*. Recent releases include Malamud's *The Natural*, Lowry's *Under the Volcano*, and Joyce's "The Dead." A novel such as *Under the Volcano* is very cinematic, and questions may focus on how the director, John Huston, treats the Consul's drunken reveries: are they presented as dreams or as quick flashbacks that jolt us? Indeed, why did he decide to treat the element of time, which jumps backward and forward so often in the novel, as he did? What is the point of view? Do we see through the Consul's eyes? Through those of each character? Do we view all the characters equally distant as outsiders? Do we get the Consul's thoughts in a voice-over, or does he drunkenly talk to someone, or to no one?

As a more extended example, let's consider Christopher Isherwood's novel, *Goodbye to Berlin*, and *Cabaret*, the award-winning musical film adaptation. I use these two as examples for a variety of reasons: I love the book; I love the film; and I have taught them in tandem in both literature and composition courses. (I've also had my film class view *Cabaret* as an example of an atypical musical; however, that use is outside my purposes here.) What first suggested the combination to me was the narrator's comment in the novel that "I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking." After this, the notions of narrator, point of view, and subjectivity vs. objectivity seemed like naturals.

Goodbye to Berlin is a useful book because of Isherwood's eminently readable style ("Fatal readability" one critic called it, as if clear prose were the kiss of death—much like a cliche). It is also useful because it is broken into six sections. These sections largely focus one specific character or situation and thus the novel can easily be assigned in chunks and the chunks discussed in class without spoiling what is to come. Although the novel appears to be a collection of short stories, there is a definite symmetry to the overall construction and more advanced classes might want to consider this symmetry. It also has a first-person, namesake narrator, and so questions regarding point of view and reliable narrators can be raised. And too, the novel is set in pre-Hitler Berlin and provides some understanding of that period in a much more human context than the history texts are likely to do. Important discussion could also occur in making connections between some of the activity and views held in the 1930s and those we find in today's society, especially among the "skinheads" and Aryan-supremacy groups.

Cabaret is equally outstanding with an Oscar-winning performance by Liza Minelli, some excellent editing, and a number of catchy tunes. Scenes such as the German slap-dance juxtaposed with two Nazis beating a man in the alley provide not only a shiver but a possible understanding of why later atrocities could have occurred. Students can gain a great deal by examining ironic juxtapositions such as this throughout the film. Another juxtaposition which comes to mind is the scene of the young German boy singing "Tomorrow Belongs to Me" while the camera slowly moves from his innocent face to reveal the swastika on his arm. The fact that the scene itself is so idyllic and only chilling because of historical hindsight provides an opportunity to address the human question of what happened in 1930s Berlin and to discuss how the film achieves its emotional effects. Film is supposed to show, but we create this meaning ourselves. You can also explore the film's naive protagonist and the anti-Semitic comments that are made.

In comparing the two works, a number of similarities and differences will be found. Some are superficial (like the change in the protagonist's name), but others are more important. For example, is Sally Bowles more or less likeable in the film or novel? Why has the episode "On Reugen Island" been dropped from the film? You will also want to discuss whether or not the point of view changes. What do we know or not know when we lose the first-person narrator in the film? Why is the protagonist more of a participant in the film? How does this change alter our perception of events? Is the narrator in the novel indeed, "a camera . . . recording, not thinking" as is the camera used for the film? Does the camera just record? What about the fact that it selects what it shows us? Why is the cabaret added to the film? Does it perform a function formerly handled by the narrator in the novel? What role does the emcee play? Is there a comparable role in the novel? Which presents a more realistic rendering of pre-Hitler Berlin? Which affects the reader or viewer the most? Why? The questions go on and on and range from technical matters such as the protagonist's role to the moral issues of murder and personal responsibility.

A discussion of films or novels will raise important points and will contribute to the education of students. In tandem, however, they call for closer reading and understanding of both novel and film. I really am not advocating that we turn English classrooms into movie theaters, nor am I in favor of exchanging books for films. I am suggesting, however, that as part of an educational program we can incorporate film into the curriculum. Since films are time-consuming as well as difficult to schedule, they can probably not be a major part of the English studies curriculum, but they do offer important ways to teach students to know and to understand their world.

Since today's student has been brought up on visual images from television, we should move from this point. If students are more comfortable with visual images, then start there and move to print images. Or begin with print and move to an increased comprehension of it through the visual medium. I believe that a good education expands our horizons and teaches us how to see in many different ways. I'd like to close with two quotes:

> "My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel—it is, before all to make you *see*."

> "The task I'm trying to achieve is above all to make you see."

The first was from novelist Joseph Conrad; the second from the father of the movies, D.W. Griffith.

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Useful Terminology

1. close-up: shot including only a portion of the subject, such as the head or hand
2. cross-cutting: alternation of shots usually to suggest one of the following effects: events separated in space but occurring at the same time; comparisons, contrasts, or metaphors; events occurring sequentially, but where spatial separation is required dramatically or in cross-cut close-ups in a dialogue sequence
3. establishing shot: shot usually from distance to show the viewer the general location of the scene to follow
4. high angle shot: camera looks down at the subject, but not from directly overhead; makes subject look weak, small
5. low angle shot: camera looks up at subject, often at about a 45 degree angle from eye level; makes subject look larger, stronger
6. jump-cut: breaks the continuity of time by jumping forward from one part of an action to another, obviously separated from the first by an interval of time; may be used as a distancing device to force the audience to participate in making narrative transitions and thus to participate more actively in understanding the film, to cut out unwanted time in a scene, or to permit more spontaneous shooting.
7. voice-over: a voice (of an off-screen narrator or of a character previously established in the film) which accompanies the action on the screen but has no immediate visual referent

ETO, PTO, and All the Ships at Sea

Gene Geiger
Special Collections Librarian, Auburn University

In 1991, the United States will mark the fiftieth anniversary of its entry into World War II. Although the United States furnished the Allied Powers with supplies and other supports, it was not until December 7, 1941, after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, that active participation began. Before World War II was over, 16,000,000 men and women served in the armed forces. They saw duty in Europe, in the South Pacific Islands, in Africa, in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The total number of casualties from this war was 1,078,162. Of the total number of service men and women, two percent were from Alabama—288,003. The number of casualties for the state was slightly over 6,000.

Things were busy at home during this period. Frank Dixon was governor when the war started, and Chauncey Sparks was in office when the war ended in August 1945. Even before the war started, Brookley Air Force Base was built in Mobile. Older military installations were revived or expanded—Fort McClellan, Maxwell Field, and Camp Rucker, now Fort Rucker. The Port of Mobile's foreign trade increased tremendously. The shipyards of Mobile built 196 new ships and repaired over 2,000. In five years, the coastal trade grew by 400 percent. In 1941, the Bankhead Tunnel was open to traffic under the Mobile River. There were 30 airfields operating in the state. Railroad mileage actually decreased during the period, but produce shipped into Alabama increased. Despite gasoline shortages, the trucking business increased greatly. Rationing boards regulated supplies of gasoline, tires, coffee, and other scarce commodities. The Office of Price Administration regulated prices. Rents were controlled, but many people were still forced to pay high rents. Above all, Selective Service Boards were quite active in drafting men to fight.

During the war years, the population of certain areas grew. Mobile County was the fastest growing, Talladega County second, and Calhoun County third. The largest employers during this time were Gulf Shipbuilding Corporation, Alabama Dry Docks and Shipbuilding Company, and Brookley Air Force Base. Even with this unusual growth in other areas of the state, Birmingham remained the center of largest population.

My purpose is to identify some books written by Alabamians about World War II. These books present the recollections of those involved with the war and the effects it had on their lives.

The European Theatre of Operations

One of Alabama's most prolific writers of World War II fiction is

William E. Butterworth, a.k.a. **W.E.B. Griffin, Allison Mitchell, Blakely St. James, William Patrick, Eden Hughes, Webb Beech, Walker E. Blake, James M. Douglas, Edmund O. Blake, Edmund O. Scholefield,** and **Jack Dugan.** His first series of war novels is *Brotherhood of War.* This series now consists of eight volumes, with the ninth volume, *Battleground,* due in early 1991. The only volume in the series that deals with World War II, *The Lieutenants,* starts in 1941 and ends with the Korean War, May 1950. The other volumes of this series deal with the Korean and Vietnamese conflicts. Under the pseudonym **Alex Baldwin,** William Butterworth completed another series called *Men at War.* This four-volume series is devoted to the history and fiction of the exploits of the OSS. Under the leadership of the not-so-fictional James Donovan, young fighters, flyers, and spies were sent to the four corners of the globe, assaulting the Axis powers. The third series by William Butterworth is *The Corps,* which traces the saga of the US Marines during the war. At the moment only three volumes of this series have been completed.

While William Butterworth has devoted a great deal of time to writing war fiction, his wife, **Emma M. Butterworth,** has produced one of the most interesting works of non-fiction about World War II. Born in Vienna, Emma Butterworth studied ballet at the Vienna State Opera. Her book, *As the Waltz Was Ending,* tells about growing up in Austria during the Nazi Occupation. While studying ballet, she met some of the great musicians of the time, including Richard Strauss.

William Bradford Huie, while not considered a war novelist, also contributed to war literature produced by Alabamians. His most charming book, *The Americanization of Emily,* tells the story of a war bride's life in America. Other works by Huie are non-fiction.

Mac Hyman, who attended Auburn University for a short time, wrote one of the most comic novels to come out of World War II, *No Time for Sergeants.*

Michael McDowell's *The War,* a curious novel with a war setting, is the fifth volume of his series, *Blackwater.* Like most of his early work, it is a horror novel. McDowell has written adventure stories under the names **Mike McCray** and **Preston McAdam;** he writes mystery novels as **Nathan Aldyne.**

Pacific Theatre of Operations

Two outstanding works dealing with the war in the Pacific are **Eugene Sledge's** *With the Old Breed at Peleliu and Okinawa* and **Holland M. Smith's** *Coral and Brass.* They are memoirs from two entirely different perspectives—a PFC in the Marines and a career officer. After the war, Sledge returned to civilian life and an academic career, while Smith rose to the rank of general. Both are graduates of Auburn University.

Dr. Eugene Sledge, retired biology professor from the University of Montevallo, provides a vivid description of the lives of American soldiers who served in the South Pacific. Unnoticed when it was first published, *With the Old Breed* was recently cited in Paul Fussell's "The Real War, 1939-1945" (*The Atlantic Monthly,* August, 1989). This revival of interest has led Oxford University to reprint the book.

In *Coral and Brass*, **Holland M. Smith** reveals himself—and possibly other officers like him—as difficult, yet sensitive, caring, and protective. Above all, he cared for those who served under him. His devotion to the Marines was so strong that it was almost impossible for him to accept troops from other branches of the armed forces. Smith is the father of modern amphibious warfare, developing such landing crafts as the LCMs, LCVPs, and LSTs.

All the Ships at Sea

In searching the literature of World War II, I found it difficult to locate material about Alabamians who served in the Navy. No naval memoirs are comparable to Sledge's. No admiral achieved the same distinction as General Smith. Yet many Alabamians did serve in the Navy. **William Bradford Huie** recounts the exploits of the Navy's Seabees. **Wyatt Blassingame** tells the story of the deeds of the "frogmen." **John Beecher** recounts the story of the sailors aboard the *Booker T. Washington*. **Mark Childress**, in his novel *V for Victor*, tells the story of a teenager growing up on Mobile Bay, enemy spies, and Nazi submarines.

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Comment and Response

What is Education?

I hope that this new feature that will become a regular part of Alabama English. *Several months ago, William C. Taylor opened the discussion by submitting "Where Has Cultural Literacy Gone?" a comment on "Food for the Mind, 1989-1990: Emphasis on Reading Program"* (Alabama English, *Fall 1989).*

When editors receive a comment about a published article, they usually contact the author for a response. In this case, the concerns Taylor brings up are so significant, wide ranging, and interesting that I decided to invite a response not only from the author of the article he commented about but also from other former contributors to Alabama English. *As you can see, the responses are varied in approach and attitude, with all grade levels represented to some extent.*

What do you think about the concerns raised here? Do other articles in Alabama English *deserve a comment? Send me your comments, 1000 words or less.*

Comment

Where Has Cultural Literacy Gone?

William C. Taylor
Talladega College, Talladega, Alabama

The Emphasis on Reading book list for K-12 assembled by the Children's and School Librarians Division of the Alabama Library Association (*Alabama English*, Fall 1989, 39-42) is well motivated if it stimulates young people to read. But its content disturbs me, and I think anyone else who has read E.D. Hirsch's *Cultural Literacy* may feel the same. If I were a child, I could read most of the books on the list and think that hardly anything happened, hardly anyone lived, hardly any stories were told before my own lifetime or outside my home town.

Where are Cinderella and Mother Goose? Maybe they belong to preschool years, with mother on the couch and children cuddled next to her in their pajamas just before bedtime, when their imaginations run wild. But so many children don't grown up in that kind of environment that it might be a treat for those who know the characters to be able to revisit them in the first and second grades and introduce their less privileged classmates to them.

Children enjoy meeting people their parents and grandparents grew up with, and the same is true of the books they

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read. I have many happy memories of my bi-weekly summer trips to the library to check out *Tom Sawyer, Treasure Island,* and biographies of Elizabeth I, Lady Jane Grey, Victoria, Henry VIII, and Joan of Arc. I wonder if they are now hard to find among Windrider, Cool Clyde, and Rosy Cole. Reading the ALA books must be like living in a family that has moved a thousand miles from its roots and relatives, where the parents don't know any of the children's friends and the children never see aunts, uncles, or grandparents.

I see at least one name I recognize on the list—Martha Washington—but who are Candace and Pulcifer? And who is Mick, who joins the RAF in World War II? Does he know Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin? Will the reader know where Germany and France are or be able to say whether World War II took place in the twentieth century or the eighteenth? I hope *Indian Chiefs* by Russell Freedman introduces seventh graders to Geronimo and Sitting Bull, not just to fictitious chiefs representing all Indians. Real people (and time-tested fictional ones) are much more interesting.

Certainly children's literature is supposed to teach coping skills, and those who read the suggested books may learn a lot: how to find a lost toy, how to survive being the new kid in school, or how to see success as more than designer labels. But what about Joan of Arc's conflicts, Robin Hood's difficulties, Ferdinand and Isabella's risk? They too teach us—to listen to our consciences, to consider a greater good than the law, to invest in the future. To a child who knows someone with hemophilia, reading about Nicholas II, Alexandra, Alexei, and Rasputin can give great insight into the suffering of the family and the folly of desperate attempts at quack cures.

To the extent that the old stories fail to meet modern readability requirements they simply provide a welcome challenge. Sometimes the lessons are in metaphorical language—magic swords and glass slippers—but they not only stimulate our imagination in childhood, they come back decades later to enlighten us.

Yes, I agree that traditional children's literature was ethnically slanted. The new list rightly contains stories of Indians, Jews, and blacks. But I don't think they were ever totally excluded. Remember Sequoia, Anne Frank, Albert Einstein, and Booker T. Washington? And if I were a Greek- or German-American I might still feel slighted by the absence of classical mythology and *Grimm's Fairy Tales.*

Of course Florence Nightingale (a nurse) and Friday (a black servant) were not adequate role models for female lawyers and black statesmen. But they do tell us about our heritage, and isn't the past better remembered and discussed than ignored and forgotten?

Response

Cultural Literacy, Literacy, and Literature

Charles Avinger
Troy State University, Troy, Alabama

Much has been written about the issue of cultural literacy since the publication of E.D. Hirsch's book, and certainly there is cause for concern when we realize how little many students at all levels know about their world, past and present. (At a recent conference a faculty member at another university told me that her students did not understand the parallels she drew between *Gulliver's Travels* and current political developments because they did not recognize her contemporary references. The mystifying references? Nelson Mandela and Ferdinand Marcos.) We know that a severe problem exists. Yet underlying our society's problem with "cultural literacy" is a deeper, more serious problem with literacy itself, and here lies the heart of the question. What do we do about the simple fact that our young people are just not reading?

I am afraid that, in some cases, English classes have the unintentional effect of fostering a lasting hatred of reading in students. We have all stood in front of classes in which none of the students have done the assigned reading. Is it realistic to expect the average 14-year-old to be able to appreciate Shakespeare and Dickens? And is there a solution to the dilemma?

One possible solution, I believe, is programs such as Emphasis on Reading. The books on the ALA list are colorful, lively, and chosen for one purpose—to encourage students at all grade levels to discover the joy reading can bring into their lives. Although it is true that the ALA list does not include any of the "classics," it is also important to note that the list is not meant to be all-inclusive. (How could 32 books covering grades K-12 hope to represent all of the literature students "should" know, even if such a list were desirable?) Nor does the list imply that these books are more valuable or worthy of students' time than *Treasure Island* or *Grimm's Fairy Tales*. Obviously *The Scarlet Letter* is a much more important work of literature than *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistlestop Cafe*, but such a comparison does not mean that Fannie Flagg's book should not be read and enjoyed by young people. Students who enjoy *Fried Green Tomatoes* will go on to read more, perhaps finding their way to Shakespeare, Tennessee Williams, and Henry James eventually. Students who suffer through a "culturally literate" but unengaging course of study may never read again. And those are the students who will offer blank stares of incomprehension when a name like Nelson Mandela is mentioned in a social studies class or in a lecture on *Gulliver's Travels*.

Cultural literacy is definitely an important educational goal, but we must remember that *literacy* is the key word in that phrase—and it must come first. In the so-called "information age," it is no longer possible or desirable to reduce the knowledge a person "needs" to a dry, sterile list of names, dates, and places, as Hirsch and others would have us believe. Instead we should do everything we can to foster a love of reading and learning in our students so that they will be motivated to become informed and seek out "the good stuff" because they want to. Otherwise we will have a nation of adults for whom Shakespeare, Dickens, and Hawthorne are nothing but vague, unpleasant memories—and that would be a shame. I recommend putting Hirsch back on the shelf for a while and instead pondering the words of Alfred Mercier: "What we learn with pleasure, we never forget."

Response

An Endorsement of the Emphasis on Reading Book List

Nancy Compton Williams
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Since the mid 1970s, Alabama librarians, reading teachers, and English teachers have met annually to prepare a brief list of contemporary books which they deem worthwhile as additions—not substitutes—for those books traditionally suggested for young readers. These educators have felt the need to broaden the scope of recommended readings and have facilitated teachers' selection of supplemental titles by assessing the publications personally and debating each book's value in committee before recommending it. The Emphasis on Reading book list was never intended to supplant the historically core canon but to amplify it.

Young people who have grown up entertained by animated visual images on television must be coaxed into focusing inward as a reader does. Their eyes have tracked the fast-paced antics of cartoon characters and superheroes while they passively observed. Teachers ask them to learn to see in a different way—to focus on words and follow that line of vision into their own imaginations. Because of television's dominant influence on their ways of thinking, average students, K-12, are less ready to settle down to reading a good book than were their predecessors.

As a teacher of senior high English, I have found that most students have inadequate reading skills. They stumble over ordinary words when reading plays aloud. They've heard all the words before on television, but they've not read them and thus don't recognize them in print. They have refused to read the book for a book report assignment, preferring instead to check out the video. So their reading skills have suffered.

But high-interest literature attracts them. They want to read, even though reading is difficult for them, when the material touches them personally. They can be drawn into the use of their inner eye, into the use of their imagination, into familiarity with the printed word by this quality supplemental reading. We've got to teach them to *want* to read because other choices of entertainment available to them have seduced them away from the reading experience.

The challenge facing educators today is not so "welcome" because it involves more than teaching young people to measure up to "modern readability requirements" in literature. We must compete with cultural detractors maintaining that all learning should be as easy and entertaining as watching television. We must convince students that success is truly based on achievement and effort, not dealing in drugs or privilege. The Emphasis on Reading book list is helpful in that the selections have been evaluated by educators and are a good starting point to draw young readers deeper into the reading experience, involving them ultimately with classic literature of the ages.

Response

The Canon

Mary Beth Culp
University of South Alabama, Mobile, Alabama

There's something comforting about lists of any kind. They give us structure, direction, limits. Even when they're overwhelming, at least we know what we have to do or need to do. And, best of all, we know when we're finished. We have the satisfaction of checking items off and feeling that sense of relief that comes from doing what we set out to do.

The idea of required or recommended reading lists is appealing for many of the same reasons, and it has the additional weight of cultural and educational significance that is missing from some of the more mundane list-making we do. The word *canon* sounds official, even sacred. We like to think that if we decide what students should read and make sure that they read it, we will have done our part to insure that they are educated and will have passed on our cultural heritage.

There are two major problems with this way of thinking. The first involves the concept of culture, which we like to think of as monolithic and constant, but which is in fact diverse and dynamic. Culture changes and the literature that reflects it is bound to change, too. To demonstrate this fact we have only to look at the canon of 100 years ago, or even 50 years ago. At the turn of the century, Macaulay's essay on Addison was on the Uniform List and was required reading in 60 percent of American high schools (Applebee). Do we really believe that students would be better educated or more culturally literate if they read Macaulay's essay instead of Chaim Potok's *The Chosen* or Richard Wright's *Black Boy*? An examination of this question reveals to us the fact that our cultural heritage is not in a list of works but in the changing history of ideas and perceptions that the works contain. We must realize that no one book or list of books can make us literate, cultured, or educated. It is the habits of mind developed by wide reading that lead to true cultural literacy. The Great Books are great because they reflect conflicting and changing views on universal themes and ideas.

But the most important reason to resist the idea of a required reading list is at the heart of the study of literature, and that is the nature of literature itself. We must resist the temptation to make the literature curriculum a body of knowledge. That approach is contrary to our most important goals in teaching literature: we want students to *experience* literature rather than *cover* it. Louise Rosenblatt's transactional theory of literary response expresses this experience with literature as a transaction between the reader and the work, with the reader bringing all his or her prior experience to bear on the reading and actually performing on the text. In this view, the meaning is in the transaction rather than in the work. The reader and the work are on the same plane, unlike the "mountaintop" model of the New Criticism, with its emphasis solely on the work. In this transactional model the student is actively engaged, responding in a personal way to the themes, ideas, conflicts, and dilemmas presented in the literature. If such a transaction is our goal, then it does not really matter what the work is. As painful as this fact may be for us to acknowledge, we must do so if we are to encourage students to develop their own responses to literature (and to life) through exposure to a wide variety of works including the classics, modern works, minority literature, and adolescent literature. Furthermore, we must give students choices in their reading. I believe that students are likely to read more and to have a response with self-selected reading, and the more they read, the more likely they are to develop lifetime reading habits which lead to real cultural literacy.

If we look at the literature curriculum from a response-centered point of view, the canon loses some of its appeal. What we have instead are suggested titles from librarians, teachers, and students themselves. These titles evolve from reading experiences and are descriptive rather than prescriptive in nature. These titles should reflect the diversity and the evolution of our culture and invite young people to experience literature as they develop cultural literacy. Perhaps we can then develop new kinds of lists. Rather than checking off lists of works read, we can check off responses which reflect transactions with what has been read. Even so, we will never be able to predict or evaluate what happens when a reader meets a book; it is a personal, internal, and unobservable phenomenon. The best way to promote the likelihood of students interacting with literature is to allow them wide choices in their reading and to establish the kind of classroom climate that values individual responses.

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Response

Cultural Literacy: The Larger Perspective

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In response to questions raised in the above comment about the Emphasis on Reading program, I would first like to provide some background information about this endeavor.

The Emphasis on Reading program, sponsored by the Children's and School Librarians Division of the Alabama Library Association, is an effort to encourage young people to read books of high quality which they might not otherwise encounter. As such it is not intended to provide definitive reading lists or to replace the traditional classics in children's literature. In past years a committee of librarians has held annual open meetings to select a list of books for each age level. Participating teachers then asked their classes to read these books and to vote on their favorites. In the future the selection process will be led by members of the State Department of Education with participation of committees appointed by this organization. As I understand it, the guidelines and selection process will be much the same, except that more emphasis will be given to titles from the American Library Association's annual listing of Notable Books for Children and of Best Books for Young Adults. The following guidelines, published periodically in the *Alabama Librarian,* have been used up to this point in selecting titles for the Emphasis on Reading program.

1. Lists will include books that children and young adults will enjoy.
2. Lists will include not only books children can read but also books for reading aloud.
3. Lists will include titles, for the most part, that children and young adults are not finding on their own.
4. Titles will be challenging, some old, some new.
5. Titles will represent a diversity of subjects and types of reading.
6. Lists will include titles to be read primarily for enrichment, as opposed to those read primarily for information.

7. Lists will allow for a limited representation of biography and nonfiction.

8. Lists will include books that are currently in print and many available in paperback.

9. Lists will in most cases contain only one title by a given author.

10. Lists will not have the same title on more than one list.

11. Lists will be annotated with publisher availability noted.

12. Each list should have at least 10 titles and no more than 20.

13. Lists will be continuous from year to year, so a title will not be placed on the lists more than once.

14. Lists will include Alabama authors and / or subjects when possible and applicable.

The guidelines for each age group are as follows:

1. K-1 titles will all be suitable for reading aloud; they will include stories which may have challenging vocabulary; they will include counting books, rhyming books, A-B-C books, concept books, wordless books, fantasy, folktales, animal stories, and humor.

2. 2-3 and 4-5 titles will include the following: folktales, historical fiction, poetry, biography, animal stories, science fiction, fantasy, mystery, sports, and realistic stories. Selections should take into account reading preferences of both girls and boys. Members of minority groups, strong and believable female characters, and the handicapped should be represented.

3. 6-8 titles will include most of the types listed for 2-3 and 4-5 with the addition of stories of romance and with perhaps less attention to folktales and more to realistic stories.

4. 9-12, or the high school list, will focus on young adult fiction of the last 15 years. Almost all titles should be available in paperback. Reading preferences of both males and females will be taken into account. Subjects will include romance, science fiction, fantasy, historical fiction, sports, mystery / suspense / adventure, and adolescent problems. Members of minority groups, strong and believable female characters, and the handicapped should be represented.

As these guidelines indicate, selections are not limited to contemporary modern fiction, but also include folktales, fantasy, biography, and historical fiction. According to these criteria, Cinderella, Mother Goose, Geronimo, and Sitting Bull should not be excluded. As I understand it, therefore, the Emphasis on Reading program is not intended as an attack on the traditional canon, but is an effort to ensure that children encounter "some of the best literature written for their age or stage before they get beyond it" ("Emphasis").

The guidelines encourage the selection of works which depict cultural diversity, strong female and male protagonists, and the special needs of the handicapped. As a teacher of children's literature, I believe this emphasis is entirely proper. I certainly agree with the writer of the comment that we do not want to lose our family roots, but I also believe we want to ensure that the roots of America's minority groups are also represented. In short, I believe we should expand the family circle to include the family of humankind.

In an article in *Saturday Review* written in 1965, Nancy Larrick questions the appropriateness of "The All-White World of Children's Books." Much has been done since that time to expand the subject matter of children's literature to include not only minority experience, but also such formerly taboo topics as physical and mental handicaps, sickness and death, the realities of war, parental neglect, and child abuse. Of these changes, Mary Q. Steele, author of the 1970 Newbery honor book, *The Journey Outside*, has written:

> I like to think that though I write for children, I am as free to write about anything I please as the next writer. I like to think that we respect our children's intelligence enough to suppose that the world need be presented to them in no rosy light, but as it is. . . . The world has not spared children hunger, cold, sorrow, pain, fear, loneliness, disease, war, famine, or madness. Why should we hesitate to make use of this knowledge when writing for them? (290)

African-American author Virginia Hamilton also welcomes these changes in children's literature. In her 1976 address to the National Council of Teachers of English, Hamilton discussed her motivations for writing books such as *M. C. Higgins the Great* and *The Planet of Jr. Brown*. Of these books she said, "I wanted to write of another America for which we and our children have no frame of reference." She spoke of whole segments of the society which "we have trained ourselves not to see, created on some far side of reality, unseen, exploited and unsung" and added "I wanted to sing their song." In this address Virginia Hamilton admitted that her children prefer the books of Judy Blume to her own, but she expressed her strong belief that there is a need for high quality literature which explores the complex realities of black life. She believes that "children should not wander through life unchallenged to think about these realities." As I understand it, the Emphasis On Reading program is an attempt to acquaint teachers and students with the work of writers such as Virginia Hamilton.

I am all the more appreciative of these efforts because the multi-ethnic experience was not a part of my own schooling. I am grateful that I come from a generation which was richly nurtured with works from the traditional canon, but I deeply regret that I was not also introduced to works by writers such as Langston Hughes and James Weldon Johnson. In her essay, "Saving the Life that is Your Own: The Importance of Models in the Artist's Life," Alice Walker writes, "It is, in the end, the saving of lives that we writers are about. What is always needed in the appreciation of art, or life, is the larger perspective" (14). In this same essay, she speaks of "connections made, or at least attempted, where none existed before, the straining to encompass in one's glance at the varied world, the common thread, the unifying theme through immense diversity, a fearlessness of growth, of search, of looking, that enlarges the private and the public world." And yet, Walker adds, "In our particular society, it is the narrowed and narrowing view of life that often wins" (5).

America's ethnic writers such as Virginia Hamilton and Gwendolyn Brooks challenge us to work for this wider vision in our classrooms. They guide us to question a system in which the school drop-out rate at all levels is so alarmingly high, a system in which so many are alienated, in which so much is omitted, a system in which so many lives are wasted. In her poem, "Boy Breaking Glass," Gwendolyn Brooks writes,

> "I shall create! If not a note, a hole.
> If not an overture, a desecration."
>
> . . . .
>
> "Nobody knew where I was and now
> I am no longer there."
>
> . . . .
>
> "It was you, it was you who threw
> away my name!
> And this is everything I have for me."
>
> Who has not Congress, lobster, love,
> luau,
> the Regency Room, the Statue of
> Liberty,
> runs. A sloppy amalgamation.
> A mistake.
> A cliff.
> A hymn, a snare, and an exceeding
> sun.
>
> (Lines 7-8; 15; 20-27)

In this poem, Brooks eloquently defines the wastefulness and the dangers of our current system, and she also suggests the possibilities offered by meaningful change. She holds out hope for what Virginia Hamilton calls "the race that is to be." If such hopes are to be realized, efforts such as those of the Alabama Library Association's Emphasis on Reading program must be encouraged.

From this perspective, true cultural literacy requires expansion, not exclusion. I believe educators, teachers, and parents must work very hard to introduce young readers to as wide a range of literature as is possible, to make every effort to create a multi-racial, multi-cultural reality within our classrooms. Such efforts may help us to effect the changes which British poet Stephen Spender urged back in the 1930s. In his poem, "An Elementary Classroom in a Slum," Spender pleaded with educators to provide windows to a larger world: to "Break, O break open" the limits placed on children's lives; "to show the children to the fields and all their world / Azure on their sands, to let their tongues / Run naked into books, the white and green leaves open / The history theirs whose language is the sun" (Lines 29-33).

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Response

Reflections on Recommended Book Lists

Gloria Solomon
Pinson Elementary School, Pinson, Alabama

While visiting classrooms last week, I took time in one to ask the 34 fifth graders engaged in Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) time what they were reading. About 15 eagerly volunteered to tell me their book titles while the other students held up their books for me to see. Interestingly, not one book was a classic.

Most of the girls were reading about being popular. The boys favored stories about cars and adventure. I also noticed that my visit, which on other occasions was usually viewed by the students as a welcome break from the required instructional fare, this time seemed to interrupt what they preferred to be doing. Their concentration and enjoyment of the stories was intense.

That evening thinking back on the day, I was reminded of the Emphasis on Reading book list assembled by the Children's and School Librarians Division of the Alabama Library Association. The books on that list and other books on the same topics are the overwhelming favorites of students. Classic literature—that is, books that have stood the test of time and are agreed upon as being classics by a majority of well-educated people—is not readily chosen for DEAR time in or out of school.

Of course, nothing is new about school-aged students' choices in reading matter except that current books for children are more appealing than ever. First, many books are being written and published today about social issues. These books acknowledge human feelings about topics of current concern—divorce, one-parent families, school failure, drug and alcohol abuse, for example. The young readers can more directly relate to books written in recent times than to those considered classics. I cannot help but think, too, that the enthusiasm for reading I saw in that fifth-grade class and the excitement about books I see throughout the school has been fueled by the whole language movement. Students in the past five years have been exposed at earlier and earlier ages to a wide variety of experiences with writing and reading and listening. They seem much more excited about reading than I remember myself being at that age.

As encouraging and heartening as it is to see an entire class hooked on contemporary literature, it is imperative for the sake of a balanced reading diet that schools and library associations also supply a list of recommended classics for both free and required reading. I think it is unlikely that youngsters will choose the classics for free reading unless they have had extensive previous exposure.

When I was 11, I received a 31-volume set of Robert Louis Stevenson's works for my birthday from my aunt and uncle who owned a bookstore in New York City. Although I was grateful for my relatives' kindness, I just could not seem to generate any interest in *Treasure Island* or in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.* Reading those classics was "like living in a family that has moved a thousand miles from its roots and relatives." At 11, I thought Robert Louis Stevenson's 31 books were boys' books. I was far more interested in the Nancy Drew mysteries.

Had a teacher assigned any of Stevenson's works I would have forced myself to read them. In high school I read all the assigned work. As a result I began to take an active interest in the knights of King Arthur's Round Table and to love Francis Bacon's essays. In college I chose from several of the books on the recommended list. I dearly loved *Vanity Fair*, and as a result, was interested in reading every other book Charles Dickens ever wrote. The same was true of the *Brothers Karamozov*. First, I read everything I could find written by Dostoyevsky, and later, my interests extended to other Russian authors. Those classics became my all-time favorites. They made me think and changed my thinking. And as moving and stimulating as the classics were to me at 14 and 16 and 20, I know now their flavor was not at that time fully savored.

If the goal of all reading programs is to instill a lifelong love of reading, what I saw in that fifth-grade classroom is proof that at least in that class, students are noticeably excited about reading, especially reading contemporary literature. But this is a rich and fertile environment for other seeds to be planted and for an active interest in the classics to flourish. I fully support the use of lists by librarians and other educators. Despite the question about who should choose, I feel that librarians' associations and school advisory councils can and should guide children's choices. However, in my view, the Emphasis on Reading book list for K-12 assembled by the Children's and School Librarians Division of the Alabama Library Association has too narrow a focus. The teacher's role is to expose students to the widest variety of literary works possible.

In my opinion, neither E. D. Hirsch's list nor Mortimer Adler's list is all-inclusive, but I do agree with both educators that a shared culture requires transmission of specific information. While a single list can never be all-inclusive, lists furnish a place to begin in directing youngsters' reading through the historical paths of yesteryear as well as through the labyrinths of current social and historical perspectives.

Response

"You've Come A Long Way, Baby!"

Elaine Hughes
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As someone with an academic specialization in contemporary American literature, I suppose I am especially sensitive to the current debate over a traditional "canon" of works acceptable for literary study. Often have I been mockingly reminded by several of my colleagues that "nothing of value has been written since 1400 AD," and for many years I have carried around with me a burden of guilt—guilt for preferring the works of John Barth and Alice Walker, of John Updike and Toni Morrison, of Lucille Clifton and Kris Kristofferson to those of the more familiar "major" American and British writers. I feared professional retribution and public humiliation if the truth was ever discovered, that I was teaching the elements of poetry with song lyrics from Simon and Garfunkel, mythic archetypes with those found in George Lucas's *Star Wars*, and the loss of innocence theme with Rob Reiner's cinematic portrayal *Stand by Me*. Surely, if revealed, I would have been banished from the community of believers by those orthodox patrons of the concept of a classic literary canon, a canon containing works written primarily by white males and, with few exceptions, composed before 1940. And I certainly would have been ostracized for daring to extol a filmmaker as the artist savior of contemporary humanity. Thus, the current challenge of those long-standing principles for inclusion in a classroom anthology has, at least in my mind, vindicated those of us in the profession who have dared to venture into the realm of contemporary literature and to explore its use in the classroom as a vehicle for understanding ourselves and our culture.

The traditional definition of a classic work—one that has "withstood the test of time"—excludes, of course, *any* contemporary work, and without the efforts of courageous filmmakers, "classics" such as Bernard Malamud's *The Natural*, Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*, and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* might never have been discovered by American readers, many of whom went to the novels after viewing the movies. Of course, this type of discrimination or rejection has traditionally been a problem for contemporary writers: woe for all of us today if everyone who in 1855 received a copy of *Leaves of Grass* had reacted the same way as John Greenleaf Whittier and tossed it into the fire! But are not we, as professional educators and teachers, extinguishing those sparks of creativity and imaginative interpretation of life and literature if we exclude from our teaching "canons" those works by contemporary authors that may challenge, embrace, explore new concepts, different cultures, and modern media of expression, works like Toni Cade Bambara's *Gorilla, My Love* and Susan Griffin's *Voices*, Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, George Lucas's *Star Wars* and Stephen Spielberg's *Indiana Jones and The Last Crusade*.

In the "Preface to the 1855 Edition of *Leaves of Grass*," Walt Whitman wrote:

> The American poets are to enclose old and new for America is the race of races. Of them a bard is to be commensurate with a people. To him the other continents arrive as contributions . . . he gives them reception for their sake and for his own sake. His spirit responds to his country's spirit. . . .

The American spirit of the twentieth century is multifaceted: based on the traditions of its predominantly English founders, it is exploding with the turmoil and emotions of a society reexamining and revaluating its mores, its customs, its beliefs in a technological, multi-lingual, gender-conscious world. And, as Whitman writes:

> for such the expression of the American poet is to be transcendent and new. . . . Let the age and wars of other nations be chanted and their eras and characters be illustrated and that finish the verse. Not so the great psalm of the republic. Here the theme is creative and has vista. Here comes one among the wellbeloved stonecutters and plans with decision and science and sees the solid and beautiful forms of the future where there are now no solid forms.

Contemporary artists such as N. Scott Momaday and Rudolfo Anaya, Bobbie Lee Mason and Nikki Giovanni, Tina Howe and August Wilson are invading the provinces of the "wellbeloved stonecutters" and are shaping "solid and beautiful forms" of literary expression for all of us, their contemporaries, to experience and enjoy. We, as teachers, must risk being branded non-believers or radicals but must persevere in opening new worlds and new vistas for our students while they learn to value literature as the key to the treasure of understanding themselves and their world.

Response

A Shot Across the Laurels

Bert Hitchcock
Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama

Because my wife's maiden name is Canon, I suspect that, except for professional churchpeople or military historians, I have used that word, pronounced that combination of sounds, more consistently than have most persons over the last two-plus decades. Within the last few years, however, this extensive personal usage of mine has been left far behind by any number of my colleagues in literary studies. "The canon" (defined in one recent controversial anthology as "the list of works and authors believed to be sufficiently important to read, study, write about, teach—and thus transmit to the next generation of readers" [*The Heath Anthology of American Literature* Paul Lauter, ed. 1990]) has been and continues to be a hot professional item. Perhaps, by definition, all such items appear crucial at a given time, but as we enter the decade of the 1990s, this one still seems a fundamental, truly important issue.

James Olney provided a brief simple summary for readers of his *Studies in Autobiography* (1988). "In the academic world of the previous decade," he wrote, "there has been a concerted effort to reconstruct American literature (and other literatures as well, of course) and to redefine the canon that determines who and what will be admitted to serious literary study. Not only have previously excluded groups of writers—women, blacks, other minorities—been given entry into the canon, but also various writing modes . . . are recognized as having claims equal to those of more traditional literary genres" (xiv-xv).

Sharon O'Brien in an essay on Willa Cather in *Reading in America* (Cathy N. Davidson, ed. 1988) also provides a summary of the present state of affairs, a little less concise and simple but helpful, too, I think. "Recent developments in literary theory," she says, "have questioned traditional assumptions of literary value and evaluation, requiring that we cease to regard the American literary canon as an objective, impartial list of those classic writers whose work has simply withstood the test of time." That "literary value arises from timeless, universal qualities inherent in the work" has received serious challenge. "Reader-response criticism," O'Brien goes on,

> has called our attention to the ways in which meaning and value, as well as the aesthetic criteria used to determine them, are the products of the social, political, and ideological assumptions that readers bring to texts. . . . Other studies of canon formation have pointed out that the assessment of literary value and the selection of certain texts and writers as "classic" or "major" are not based solely on aesthetic criteria;

> rather the construction of a literary canon results from a complex process of cultural production and transmission in which publishers, reviewers, editors, literary critics, and teachers structure the interaction between the text and the reader. (241)

It is not easy for me now to reconstruct all of my personal reactions to the phenomenon that Olney and O'Brien describe. Because by inclination and training I am a literary historian, I shouldn't have been, and was not, I think, tremendously surprised by these revelations. I have been talking about Indian and other "local" literature in my Auburn courses for many years, and pointedly discussing writings by blacks and women for almost as long; more than one of my longtime colleague friends refer to me as a specialist in minor, forgotten American writers. Even so, I am not sure that until all the canon hoopla I had much conscious, intellectual grasp of the issues. Certainly the wide scholarly and professional attention helped me to focus much more clearly, to crystallize and connect a lot that I had picked up with long foraging in the fields and woods of American publication history and neglected books, and to come to much firmer conclusions about exactly what it was I had found.

I am glad all this happened, glad for me and for the profession, glad especially for all those we teach whose world it will be in the future. But that doesn't make our present situation as educators any more enviable, any less of a predicament. In fact, it is a pretty tight place. We can't know all literature, and we can't come close even to teaching all the literature we know. Is our job to provide students with the knowledge of the past, or teach them to think on their own?

The answer is yes. The questions are interdependent, complementary. And the single answer is both the glory and agony of the present debate about the canon.

The simple but not-easy imperative—our great challenge *and* great opportunity, as the politicians say—is that we must become more knowledgeable, more aware, more reflective, more open, more decisive learners and teachers. We are going to have to question principles, "first causes," and objectives more critically: what exactly are we trying to do in teaching literature, and why? Even more basic: what *is* literature? what *is* knowledge? and why? All the answers, primary and secondary, that we arrive at need to be our well-earned own, after we consider how persons before us, and contemporary with us, have answered. And once an answer, we need to realize, is not necessarily always an answer—certainly, not *the* answer. Intelligently recognizing our many dependencies, we have to cultivate and achieve an informed independence—this is crucial. Understanding and accepting our needful reliance on others, we must develop a self-reliance that is at the same time humble and confident.

But, out of ethereal Emersonian (Christopher Cranchian?) vagueness to the Whitmanian (Sonia Sanchezian?) nitty-gritty: just what the devil am I as a conscientious professional going to have (request?) the students in my classes read, and what am I going to say about it? Am I going to assign Sui-Sin Far, Zitkala-Sa, Garrett Hongo, Hendrick Aupaumut, Angelina Grimkè Weld, Nathaniel Hawthorne, William Faulkner, Emily Dickinson, Robert Frost, or Henry David Thoreau? Frankly, candidly, at this moment, among those choices, and in such general abstractness I cannot say precisely, absolutely. But when I face my actual class, I can and will say, and I will relate, too, that I (I!) have made my selections with extensive knowledge of the selections and opinions of other thoughtful souls over the years, *and* not failed, certainly, to listen very carefully to myself as a reader. I will point out, too, that my possible, potential choices were tremendous in number and that the next time around I might well exercise other options—no less justified I would hope, but quite different. I will try to make very clear, as a principle and an exemplary goal, that what I as a teacher am dealing with, am attempting to transmit, is not so much what I've learned (many years ago? unquestioned, unexamined since?) as what, from that base, I'm learning. Whether a teacher has these educational, informing conversations entirely with himself or herself, or, as a teacher can and should, also directly with more mature students is not the critical thing, however; it is the grammatical TENSE (and person[al]) that makes all the difference.

All this presupposes, of course, some working individual concepts and moral intellectual comfort about what literature is and does, or may be and can perhaps do. Discussion of these basic considerations cannot, fortunately or unfortunately, have a place here. My thinking about the ideal teacher with relation to the canon question is similar to that of Bruce Henricksen about the ideal reader of his *Reorientations: Critical Theories and Pedagogies* (1990). This person, Henricksen says, is "someone, who, while not seeking to bury all the canonized touchstones of the past, is aware of how traditional forms of knowledge have served the interests of some at the expense of others" ([2]). Or, I might add, "someone who, while aware of how traditional forms of knowledge have served the interests of some at the expense of others, does not seek to bury all the canonized touchstones of the past."

Announcement

Alabama Humanities Foundation Provides Speakers Bureau

The Alabama Humanities Foundation is providing a speakers bureau throughout 1991 celebrating the bicentennial of the Bill of Rights. Groups other than schools—such as libraries or civic clubs who will open the meeting to the public—may request a speaker by contacting Marion Carter at the Alabama Humanities Foundation, Box 2280, Samford University, Birmingham, Alabama 35229, phone 205-870-2300. Available speeches are as follows:

- Mel Brandon, "The Bill of Rights and the Nancy Cruzan Case"
- Linda Busby, "Efforts to Censor Public School Textbooks," "Free Speech, the First Amendment, and the Christian Right," "Regulating Rock Music and Preserving Free Speech"
- Bob McKenzie, "Freedom of Speech: Public Policy and Value Conflicts"
- Joan Nist, "Children's Rights and the First Amendment"

The Alabama Humanities Foundation, the state program of the National Endowment for the Humanities, awards grants on a competitive basis to nonprofit organizations in Alabama. The AHF sponsors programs in history, literature, philosophy, criticism and history of the arts, ethics, and other humanities disciplines. More than $4 million have been awarded for humanities projects since the Foundation's beginning in 1974, serving over 100,000 Alabamians each year through public programs and millions through its media projects and publications. Additionally, the AHF conducts its own projects such as DISCOVERY!—a circulating media service, "Theatre in the Mind"—a pre-performance lecture / discussion series with the Alabama Shakespeare Festival, and the humanities speakers bureau.

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Myth as Method for Meaning

Sandra C. Murray
Bradshaw High School, Florence, Alabama

Mythology can be goggles to the reader. It can define, elaborate, and reveal. To gain full appreciation of literature and to use literature as a way of understanding their own experiences, students can wear mythic goggles. By telling the stories and reading the tales, students accomplish two things: they learn of the common experiences of human beings in different cultures and they answer basic questions about themselves, questions asked by all people in all times.

Carl Jung's study of common patterns in world mythologies culminated in his concept of archetypes. Among the various archetypes he identified are those of birth, rebirth, death, earth mother, demon, sage, and God. Of particular interest to the teacher of literature is the archetypal hero. Joseph Campbell, elaborating on Jung's work, describes typical heroes and their journeys in *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* (Princeton University Press, 1949). Because heroes are found in so many mythologies, Campbell calls this common pattern the monomyth. In his work, Campbell describes mythological heroes who leave the safety of their homes to encounter an unfamiliar world often filled with threatening forces. With the sometimes magical help of loyal warriors, heroes successfully face supreme ordeals. Their triumphs result in boons which they then take back to their homes to share. A boon may be

> represented as the hero's sexual union with the goddess-mother of the world, his recognition by the father-creator, his own divination, or . . . his theft of the boon he came to gain (bride-theft, fire-theft); intrinsically it is an expression of consciousness and therewith of being (illumination, transfiguration, freedom). (Campbell 246)

The hero journey—departure, initiation, and return—provides the thematic focus of many works which my seniors study each fall. And Campbell's hero journey also describes the personal journey my 17-year-olds make during our nine months together.

We begin our study of world literature with Greek drama and a reading of Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex*. Through myth, we leave our classroom and head to Greece where I become scop / storyteller and tell the tale of the House of Oedipus. Students learn of a young man who was initiated early into a threatening world of parricide, monster-killing, and drought. Though Oedipus blinds himself when he learns the truth of his actions, his illumination leaves him wiser and less arrogant. After hearing the myth and reading the play, students write a sequel similar to

Sophocles's version and then perform their own myths in a Dionysian Festival complete with laurel chaplets for best playwrights.

Later in the year when we study *Hamlet*, knowledge of the Oedipus myth proves enlightening as we discuss the Oedipus complex. And still later, when we read Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, we consider the Freudian analysis of Gregor Samsa's regression from human to beetle. This one myth opens our eyes to the Freudian psychological approach to literature.

Campbell's hero journey appears not only in Greek mythology, but also in contemporary works. To introduce the hero journey, I use one of my personal heroes, 12-year-old Sugar Mecklin in Lewis Nordan's "Sugar Among the Chickens" (*Harper's*, August 1983). Sugar resorts to fishing for chickens in his backyard because his overly protective mother won't let him go to the town pond. Sugar's dream is to catch a rooster, symbol of male maturity. Though Sugar successfully lands a blue Andalusian, he cannot catch the rooster. Finally, aided with a Zebco rod he won at a movie raffle, Sugar lands his catch and becomes a man, though he is forever marked by rooster battle scars on his forehead. Sugar learns that difficult tasks aren't necessarily impossible and that the world of rooster fishing includes a demon or two, but he undergoes the initiation rites, proving to his geographically trapped mother and his alcoholic dad that he is a man and will not be overcome by demon rum or Mississippi misery. After all, a boy who can catch a rooster can do anything.

Another heroic questor is Stephen Kumalo, an innocent Zulu priest in Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country*. Kumalo makes his journey from his village into a corrupt Johannesburg in an attempt to find his son. Because the Zulu mythology has been destroyed and the natives have failed to adopt the white mythology of the Anglicans, the city has become a den of evil where Zulus immesh themselves in alcohol, greed, prostitution, and murder. Though Kumalo is too late to save his son from execution, he forms a bond with a white landowner whose son has been killed by his own son. Together, the two begin to work for the good of all South Africans.

A variation of the hero archetype is the rebel hero. One such hero is Jim Stark of *Rebel Without a Cause*. Fascinated by movies and television of the 1950s, my students watch as Jim descends into a mythic night journey with gangs, an inept father, a friend. Taking place in a 24-hour period after Easter, the movie touches on the archetypal theme of rebirth. The rebel Jim fights for and wins respect from his parents and friends. His ultimate boon is a more assertive father who will stand up with him against future troubles.

Sisyphus's face is also the rebel hero's face. Scop once again, I tell the story of Sisyphus's defiance towards the gods, his refusal to live in the underworld. As punishment for his defiance, Sisyphus must eternally roll a boulder up a mountain. It is a sentence which he accepts, for while the boulder rolls downhill, Sisyphus has time for contemplation and enjoyment in the upper world. Sisyphus's defiance towards the gods in the ancient myth is the model for Camus's existential hero Meursault in *The Stranger*. Meursault defies society's outdated customs and lives an honest life, even though he will die because of defiance and honesty. These rebellious heroes and the confrontations they encounter in their journey prompt my students to ask the question basic to rebels: who am I and what do I mean?

Returning home, the hero brings the boon—a grail holy or a sword gilded. But for Oedipus, the boon is knowledge—knowledge that he does not know his real identity—and humility. Oedipus's tragedy is that he thought he knew who he was, and his discovery of his true parentage came too late. The temple at Delphi in ancient Greece stated: "Know thyself." This advice applies to my students as well as to Oedipus. The answer to this question—who am I?—is a theme central to the study of literature, and the use of the hero quest provides an effective means to increase self-knowledge, to learn who we are.

What is the boon for my seniors? Why do we bother to tell stories of Oedipus's journey, of Sisyphus's rebellion? Adolescents, more than any other age group, are Oedipus, encountering demons, gods, humans, and disasters, while trying to discover who they are. Adolescents are rebel heroes trying to make sense of social conventions and family relationships. Through learning of the common experiences in literature and life, through seeing the common faces of many heroes, my students find some answers to individual identity. Through knowing and sharing the quests of heroes such as Oedipus, Gregor, and Sisyphus, my adolescent travelers come to know themselves. Myth becomes method for meaning.

My Professional Concern

Jim Colquitt
Livingston University, Livingston, Alabama

Too often my students perceive writing a composition as something like following a math or chemistry formula. I mean that we seem to have "structured" ("all theses have *three* parts") and "corrected" ("you cannot use *I* or *you*") until any understanding that writing is a means for an individual to express a feeling or a perspective has been lost. The results are dehumanized and often ridiculous notions: "There are three wonderful things to see in Europe" or "You need to avoid syphilis because it is painful, because it can be expensive, and because you might become unpopular." The problem has reached the point that when I say "thesis" or "development with details and examples," the students are not hearing what I am saying. I want them to understand that their own experiences, feelings and judgments will be respected, but too often they don't see any relationship between these feelings and judgments and the process of writing.

Announcements

A Biographical Guide to Alabama Literature (ABGTAL) Project

The *ABGTAL* project is intended to produce a publication that will be, all in one, and useful to a variety to users, an authoritative reference book, helpful guide, and accessible handbook about belletristic works by Alabamians or about Alabama from the late eighteenth / early nineteenth century until the present.

Broadly modeled upon such reference books as the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* and *Southern Writers: A Biographical Dictionary* and designed to be both encyclopedic and stimulating in its making available of fact and assessment, the volume will consist of (1) an introductory essay on Alabama literature, (2) biographical, bibliographical, critical-descriptive entries on approximately 500 nationally published writers, and (3) three indexes based on titles of literary works, literary genre or type, and geographical regions and political subdivisions of the state.

Bert Hitchcock of Auburn University and Elaine Hughes of the University of Montevallo will be *ABGTAL* co-editors, working with a seven-member editorial board and a larger advisory board. They seek interested, qualified scholar-contributors who will write one or more entries on individual writers for the volume. Please contact either Hitchcock (English Department, Auburn University, Alabama 36849-5203, phone 205-844-4947 or 844-4620) or Hughes (Station 6501, University of Montevallo, Montevallo, Alabama 35115-6000, phone 205-665-6504).

The Gulf Coast Conference on the Teaching of Writing

The Gulf Coast Conference on the Teaching of Writing will be held August 11-14 at the Grand Hotel at Point Clear, Alabama. Keynote speakers will be Shirley Haley-James, Tom Newkirk, and Mary Ann Smith. To register and learn about special discount hotel rates, contact The Gulf Coast Conference on the Teaching of Writing, Troy State University In-Service Center, Troy, Alabama 36082, phone 205-566-8112, extension 3495.

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Writing is a Physical Activity

Lynne B. Butler
University of North Alabama, Florence, Alabama

Among the many things that we tend to forget when we attempt to teach composition is that writing is a physical activity. This point was brought home to me as I struggled reading the minuscule, crimped penmanship of a very large football player in my English composition class. Although the papers he wrote out of class were satisfactory, his in-class papers were very short and poorly developed. As his papers became shorter and shorter, our mutual despair became greater and greater. During a conference he revealed that he was having a similar problem in his drawing class. He couldn't hold the charcoal properly and his drawings, according to his professor, were "pinched." The parallel problems led me to a rather obvious, but previously overlooked conclusion: writing is a physical activity.

When I write, I expect to have a comfortable chair, good light, an absence of distractions. Students in the classroom must do without such amenities. In addition, most freshmen students are under tremendous psychological stress, part of which is engendered by the reputation of composition courses as "wash-out" courses. The stress increases with the pressure of writing in class, and an acute case of writer's block can occur. My proposed cure for writer's block for the football player was to suggest a series of physical strategies to help him learn to cope with the blank page.

I told the student to "warm up" before he came into the classroom. For five minutes before class he was to doodle on a page, draw loops of the sort penmanship students used to be taught. Then he was to write a few sentences about anything that came to mind. Once in his seat in the classroom, he was to practice alternately tensing and relaxing his shoulder muscles. For example, he was to grip the sides of the chair in which he was sitting and attempt to lift himself off the seat. This exercise had the benefits of relaxing his muscles, giving him something to do he knew he was good at, and giving him a sense of control over his situation. He was instructed that once he started writing, if he felt himself going blank, he was to get up, go out into the hall, and do some stretching exercises. In addition, I assured him that he was free to change his seat in the classroom at any time.

For this student the strategy had almost miraculous results. A student who had been turning in only three sentences began to write adequately developed essays. By acknowledging his physical relation to the task at hand, he gained a sense of control which allowed his ideas to be transferred to the page. This strategy has been particularly successful with my students who are athletes. Perhaps because they receive little or no credit for their physical skills in the regular classroom, the mere acknowledgment of the physical aspect of writing seems to give them the confidence they need to overcome writer's block. Writer's block is suffered by many students and the strategy is useful not only for football players. Successful writing requires students to develop strategies to control those factors they can and to relax with those factors they can't control.

My Professional Concern

Michael D. Cordle
Walker High School, Jasper, Alabama

Today students are faced with constant time shortages. They never seem to have enough time to do all the things they should and want to do. This concerns me particularly as a teacher because I am constantly presented assignments that are supposedly "complete," only to discover that these assignments are unsatisfactory because they have been rushed.

Granted, there are those things that do take large amounts of time: studying for other classes, building relationships, working at jobs, and enjoying recreational activities. However, it is disappointing to see so much time wasted by students who worship the television and are addicted to keeping up with characters such as Bart Simpson and Ferris Bueller.

Since good writing is one area of the curriculum that requires significant amounts of time, it seems to most often fall victim to the "lack of time syndrome." Therefore, writing has to be made interesting and rewarding for students. First, creative assignments must be given. Second, students must be given ample time in class for brainstorming, clustering, and rough draft assignments. Third, students should be allowed to keep a journal, filled with personal feelings and reflections. Fourth, teachers should assign appropriate credit for written assignments. Last, teachers should take the time necessary to give positive feedback.

Perhaps then students will be more willing to spend a little "precious time" on the writing process.

Rhetoric and Composition: A Sourcebook For Teachers and Writers

By Richard L. Graves. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton, 1990.

Reviewed by
Robbie J. Walker
Auburn University at Montgomery, Montgomery, Alabama

I read the first edition of Richard L. Graves's *Rhetoric and Composition* from cover to cover for the second time in 1980 as I prepared for my doctoral comprehensives. Some would categorize that reading as a survival imperative since my academic future depended substantially on a full grasp of the works of my major professor. But by that time I had a much more significant reason for poring over the pages and setting the major views in perspective, for by then I had embraced the philosophical and pedagogical passion of the editor for the teaching of writing and knew well his belief in the possibilities and power of the written word.

Several years later as I taught my first course in Rhetoric and Style, the second edition offered the same kind of reference as I attempted to communicate to my students the excitement, the enthusiasm, and the meticulous care with which the edition had been prepared. The edition was clearly no perfunctory collection of articles from here and there. Rather it demonstrated a carefully considered selection of articles reflecting the thoughts and speculations of bright young scholars as well as established names in the discipline. Both groups sheared the wonder and mysteries of the writing act, demonstrating an appreciation for what Anne Gere, in her review of the second edition, characterized as the "dynamism" of the discipline.

The third edition, the subject of this review, needed no recommendation for me. I approached it with anticipation and read it with the usual appreciation for the manner in which Graves had kept pace with an ever evolving discipline and had once again acknowledged the continuity of writing across different age and educational levels, but my emotions were ambivalent. Oh, I had no doubt that the articles would again represent the provocative ideas of an evolving discipline. I was not disappointed, for the editor had indeed kept pace with the shifting dynamics of the discipline. I knew, however, that I would never remove the first two editions from my shelf. They contain so many thoughts, so many motivational resources to which I have returned year after year not only for my teaching but for my own development as a practicing writer. This observation in no way diminishes the impact of the new edition that will certainly take its place on my library shelf as another exciting journey into the multifaceted world of rhetoric and composition.

The five major divisions of the new *Sourcebook* reflect Graves's grasp of and respect for the dynamics of the discipline. Introductions to the divisions describe essays comprising each discuss the relevance of the topic for composition studies.

The five essays that comprise "Part One: Introduction" explore various perspectives of the writing process and as the influence of the process emphasis in the art of writing. Essays in this division describe and evaluate transformations in the teaching of writing and clarify the dynamics undergirding the paradigm shift analyzed by Maxine Hairston in the lead article. The centrality of learning as a consequence of writing is brilliantly explicated in the articles in this section. The contributors—Maxine Hairston, R.D. Walshe, Frank Smith, Christopher Thaiss, and Lester Faigley—all confirm the wisdom of the shift from product-oriented instruction as they explore the possibilities that evolve from the writing act and validate the enhanced productivity of collaboration between teachers and student writers. These articles appropriately dispel the myth that writing is some mysterious skill to which teachers alone have access.

"Part Two: Stories From The Writing Classroom," an intriguing new section, contains eight articles confirming the cliche that the whole world loves a story. Contributors Richard J. Murphy, Jr., Carol S. Avery, Karen Rose, Alice Ackley, Diane Price, Nancie Atwell, Peggy A. Swoger, Dick Harrington, Nanette V. Mengel, and Robert Brooke demonstrate the importance of stories in the writing classroom. Theoretical views of narrative writing as the least challenging of the modes of discourse seem irrelevant as the authors dramatize the transformation this medium has wrought in the classroom and its centrality as an enduring forum for the communication of significant ideas. This division of the work is compelling and will no doubt remind or acquaint teachers of writing with the possibilities of this narration.

"Part Three: Motivating Student Writing" speaks to a concern that is never far removed from the consideration of teachers or writing. Jean Pumphrey, Gabriele Lusser Rico, Richard L. Graves, Lester Rex-Kerish, Donald L. Murray, and Alice Brand explore theoretical views of motivation as well as practical methods and exercises, many of which have the potential of arousing interest in the most reluctant writer. And the section does not ignore the reality that writing has affective as well as cognitive dimensions. The implications of this premise are crucial to understanding the complex dynamics involved in eliciting honest writing from our students.

"Part Four: Style" recognizes the value of stylistic study in judging writing but emphasizes concrete strategies individual writers can employ as they continue to grapple with this rewarding, but challenging, enterprise. Contributors to this division are Patrick Hartwell, Valerie Krishna, Frances Christensen, Winston Weathers, and William J. Vande Kopple. The major thrust of this section is the improvement of writing, rather than evaluating with considerations of grammar, types of sentences demonstrating the inherent vitality of words, different forms of writing, the placement of the subject for maximal effect, and the contributions of arrangement to readability.

"Part Five: New Perspectives, New Horizons" combines the theoretical underpinnings of the discipline with the notions of creativity and discovery to dramatize the complex nature of writing and to inform future considerations for those who love the art. This love for the art spawns a continuing search for new understandings and provocative ideas to ensure the perpetuation of the dynamism for which these editions have received praise. Stephen M. North, Joseph Harris, Linda Brodkey, Elizabeth A. Flynn, Peter Elbow, Pat Belanoff, and Ann E. Berthoff by no means provide a consensus of the means and ends of writing, but therein lies the provocation that will extend the dialogue. This continuing dialogue represents an appropriate course of action that explores competing ideologies prompting serious writers to reflect upon complex and diverse philosophies, leading ultimately to the codification of their own coherent pedagogy and theory from among several possibilities.

Most teachers and students of writing will find it impossible to view this third edition of Graves's work—as compelling and resourceful as it is—as a replacement for the first two editions. For so many of us must necessarily from time to time revisit McCrimmon, Berthoff, D'Angelo, and Graves himself in the first edition and, of course, Corbett, Fulwiler, Emig, and Vygotsky among others in the second edition. But while the new edition cannot, in the fullest sense, supplant the first two editions, it does indeed reflect in compelling fashion the dynamics of an evolving discipline. Articles selected for inclusion certainly demonstrate a respect for and a grasp of the evolution constantly in process that at once reaches back to the past for theoretical underpinnings and basic assumptions and explores possibilities, both present and future, that this vital enterprise called writing certainly requires.

Vital Signs: Bringing Together Reading and Writing

Edited by James L. Collins.
Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1990, 170 pp. $16.00.

Reviewed by
Emil W. Kaul
Bullock County High School, Union Springs, Alabama

If there is anything certain about current pedagogic theory pertaining to language arts, it is that educators are generally confused about translating new and wonderful theoretical concepts into practice. In fact, it may be fairly asserted that a modern genre of literature has blossomed around the problem of putting reading and writing theory into practice. In many cases, these books and journals have proven less than helpful to those harried and harassed classroom teachers desperate for both a solid conceptual foundation and readily implemented techniques.

Paramount among the problems that have plagued such noble publishing efforts is the oft-noted lack of a coherent philosophical base designed to match the suggested classroom techniques. This discrepancy, perhaps fostered by a sincere effort to appear unbiased or philosophically neutral, has resulted in a number of edited volumes which end up being a hodgepodge of differing ideas and seemingly incongruent methods.

Vital Signs, Heinemann's latest offering in this marketplace, has at least this sense of coherence. The volume is structured to provide just such a connection between motives and methods, with the text divided into two main parts: Motives (Part One) and Methods (Part Two). In the first section, four thought-provoking pieces of writing are presented as a basis for the methods to follow. Each has its merits, and all are related by the underlying idea that considering our motives and goals is prerequisite to teaching.

The first piece is a delightful essay by Susan Ohanian, which by itself would make the cover price worthwhile. In a style that is anything but soporific, she calls into question everything that the textbooks and curriculum guides have tried to convince us is sacred in the teaching of literature. She blithely destroys the incipient fear of failure to teach "the classics" and "suggested readings," noting that State Department of Education bureaucrats and textbook publishers don't always know what's good for our students. She is even brazen enough to suggest that it might be good for students to merely read a book they enjoy! As if that weren't heresy enough, we are asked to consider "What is this thing called Literature, and why do we want kids to do it?" I finished reading this piece with the happy feeling I had just read my own Artist's Declaration of Independence.

The other three pieces in this section, by Bruce Miller, Peter Medway and

Andrew Stibbs, and Arthur Applebee consider these same issues from a different perspective. Miller's article looks at the question "Why Do We Read Literature?" from a historical as well as reflective viewpoint, ultimately concluding that literature is one way in which humankind fulfills its "insatiable need" for "symbolization." Medway and Stibbs consider the ever-present bogey of censorship and develop well-considered responses to it, reminding teachers of their responsibility to present challenging (and even threatening) world views in a critical context. Applebee considers the role of literature as an ethical tradition and the various influences at work which tend to stifle the moral epistemology of the texts. Each piece tends to connect logically and contextually to the others.

Part Two is concerned with methodology. This is not to say that philosophy is absent, but merely to assert that the focus of these pieces is primarily upon practical applications. The backgrounds of the authors vary, ranging from professional writers and professors to secondary teachers. In addition to a variety of authors, a variety of ideas is offered. From the practical suggestions of Marni Schwartz about storytelling in the classroom and Susan Gardner's method of presenting a character through performance to the techniques for promoting critical thinking described by Patricia Kelly, this section attempts (often successfully) to cover a variety of methods designed to demonstrate and encourage the confluence of reading and writing under the broad heading of "Literature."

Part Two is broken into three subareas: Reading, Responding, and Retelling. Collins, the editor, would have us believe that the pieces submitted readily suggested these categories. Fate or not, the classifications are effective and the methods presented readily applicable to the classroom situation of any teacher interested in developing strategies to match motives. Since the authors touch on areas so fundamental to English education, their concepts and suggestions are conceivably of both philosophical interest and practical use to any teacher of language arts.

In the introduction to this collection, purported to be the first of more annual volumes, the editor states succinctly the vision of this undertaking.

> The real work of teaching literature is in providing experiences that develop reading and writing abilities for individuals, for partners and groups in collaboration, and for whole classes. Describing such experiences is what the essays in *Vital Signs* are about.

Indeed, for those intimately involved in the "real work" of teaching literature, this collection provides a coherent framework for both ideas and applications.

Encountering Student Texts: Interpretive Issues in Reading Student Writing

By Bruce Lawson, Susan Sterr Ryan, and W. Ross Winterowd, eds. 1989,
Urbana: NCTE. 242 pp. $14.95.

Reviewed by
Susan Arledge
University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, Alabama

In *Encountering Student Texts: Interpretive Issues in Reading Student Writing*, 16 writing teachers try to answer the question of how they "read" student essays. Not surprisingly, there are 16 different answers.

The book is organized into four sections after a general introduction that demonstrates the difference that interpretive strategies make. The first of the four sections, "Encountering Ways of Reading," is particularly indebted to this background information. The strategies offered here represent a wide range of critical possibilities. For example, in "The Drama of the Text," Ross Winterowd uses Northrop Frye, Samuel Coleridge, and E.D. Hirsch to provide three different readings of a single student essay. Other essays invoke Bahktin (James Thomas Zebrowski), a "feminist perspective" (Elizabeth A. Flynn), Kenneth Burke (Tilly Warnock), and "interpretive communities" (Margaret Hemley) as their particular strategy, in effect continuing Winterowd's central argument that "the theories and practices of the study of literature influence, even control, the teaching of composition." The inclusion of the student texts that these authors are reading and the careful delineation of the process involved allows even novices full participation in each particular critical method.

The second section, "Encountering Conflicts in Theory and Practice," is more unfocused, which seems reasonable given its attempt to examine the "Wonderful disjunctions [that] occur in our field." In "Asking for a Text and Trying to Learn It," Jim Corder begins by arguing that every student text is really many texts—the text the student wanted to write, the text the student thought he or she wrote, the text the student did turn in, and so on. Corder is also the first to confront the problem of evaluation, although his acknowledgment that "I do not know how to grade any more, or why" is more honest than helpful. Corder's multiple texts paves the way for the next two essays, both of which focus on the notion of intentionality in texts and yet reach apparently contradictory conclusions. Sharon Crowley argues that if intentions exist, they change so much in the process of writing that they are no longer significant. In contrast, Norm Katz argues the opposite: intentions are all that matter. Yet the necessity of an accompanying letter of intent from

Katz's students—so that he will not "misread" their papers—seems to demonstrate Crowley's point. Finally, Janice Lauer takes a different approach in responding to student texts, recreating the dialogues she engages in with her students.

The third section, "Encountering Ethical Responsibilities," begins to confront the issue of evaluation, which is what most of us mean when we say we are "reading" student texts. It is comforting to see Lisa Ede write in her journal that "I can't help it: reading student essays is work"; to hear Charles Bazerman confess that "sometimes I have cut corners and sometimes my readings have been moved only by the desire to avoid the embarrassment of facing the class the next hour with no papers to return." All of the authors in this section—John F. Flynn, Ede, Bazerman, and Stephen B. Kucer—see such psychological factors, and others, as important factors in our readings. Ede offers a poem that emphasizes Bazerman's point that the teacher remains "the most powerful person in the room," that explains Flynn's memory of his relationship with his dissertation director ("I wrote, he read and rejected"). To students, we are indeed the "final arbiter, whose world is not / my world." Our ethical responsibility is not to abuse that power.

The fourth section, "Encountering Responses to Student Texts," attempts to read the responses (the students' as well as the teacher's) rather than the text itself. Classical rhetoric, as systemized by Aristotle, is a somewhat clumsy apparatus for such a reading, but James S. Baumlin and Tita French Baumlin are persuasive in their argument that we must, as teachers, go beyond rhetorics that merely accuse, praise, or seek to change the text. Instead, they advocate "a truly collaborative, *negotiative* rhetoric of response." Richard Beach examines the factors that influence his comments on student journals and the students' reactions to these comments, concluding that responding should consider a student's level of development and encourage more engagement. Comparing his responses to students' essays with his responses to students' poetry, Anthony Petrosky discovers that he privileges the same "particulars" in both. Finally, Lee Odell categorizes students' responses to peer responses.

As a whole, the value of *Encountering Student Texts* depends on its audience's expectations. The collection opens up the problem of interpreting student texts in commendable ways. Not only does it assert that there are alternative ways of responding, but it also demonstrates that these ways are informed by our individual theories of what texts are. For those interested in composition research, the examination of what teachers do when they read student texts is long overdue, and the potentiality for further exploration seems endless. In that sense, *Encountering Student Texts* may become a seminal work in the field.

But it is easy to picture another audience for this book—teachers looking for practical help in reading their own students' papers. There are so many things that this text is *not*: a handy set of tips on how to handle the paper load, a justification for many classroom practices, a single conceptual framework to guide the inexperienced reader. Readers who come with any of these expectations will certainly be disappointed and further frustrated by the seemingly endless array of possibilities offered. The collection's diversity and its resistance to closure, which are in many ways its major strengths, may also be seen by others as its major flaws.

Rachel's Children

By Harriet Hassell with an introduction by Philip D. Beidler.
Tuscaloosa and London: University of Alabama Press, 1990, 317 pp. $18.95

Reviewed by
Nancy B. Johnson
University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, Alabama

The University of Alabama Press has begun the revisionary task of reprinting a "Library of Alabama Classics," and the editors state that works included should be "important to the history, literature, and culture of Alabama," requirements that Harriet Hassell's *Rachel's Children* certainly fits. This novel and its author share the rather common fate of works by women during this period: a gradual fading from Southern literary history. Only through recovery projects like this series can the works and the women be restored to their rightful place in the Southern canon.

In his sensitive and erudite introduction, Philip Beidler posits this novel as a "Southern feminist classic" because "it is . . . about a woman of immense psychological and spiritual presence attempting to work her way amidst structures of power, property, authority, and genealogy in a world of laws . . . created, interpreted, and administered by men." Like many of her female contemporaries, Hassell depicts a woman, Rachel Ibsell, tangled in a particularly Southern skein of sexual, religious, racial, and class prejudices. This tangle results in her psychological disintegration and her end as "the madwoman in the attic," identified by Susan Gubar as the paradigmatic feminine figure in earlier novels.

But before the novel ends, Hassell creates a text of both literary and historical significance. The author clearly understood the political and psychological underpinnings of her culture, and she has evoked these abstracts through concrete and unflinching characterization. In a move reminiscent of King Lear's magnanimous mistake, Rachel Ibsell, a landowner and mother, decides to bestow her property on the son she loves best. However, through a knotted series of events, she ends dispossessed and declared insane. Before this tragic denouement, the conflicts and personality traits that doom

Rachel and her children are explicitly revealed. For example, the following exchange between Sue Hart, her future daughter-in-law, and Rachel captures both personalities:

> Impulsively, she touched his hand on the tablecloth beside her.
>
> "What do you care?" she cried, speaking to him alone. "You're bigger than men that did go to school."
>
> Rachel Ibsell's black eyes pounced hotly on that caress. "What's that?" she called down the length of the table to them. "What are you saying?"

In this representative scene, Rachel's strength and her weakness, her love and her jealousy, are delineated in a few strokes as are Sue's love and empathy.

Hassell's description of the land is also exemplary in its accuracy and beauty. Only a person writing out of subjective knowledge and deep love could depict place so well. Early in the novel, she describes a plowed field as perfectly as it can be done in words: "The long furrows of the land ran out from the undergrowth and spread fanwise to the north and east as far as the eye could see in daylight." This picture, and many similar ones in the novel, could only have been produced from experience and feeling.

This novel can be of immense value to those of us who teach in and about Southern culture because it offers an eloquent definition in a heretofore unheard voice. Hassell neither romanticizes the South or womanhood as her contemporary Margaret Mitchell did in *Gone With The Wind* nor is as condemnatory of the landed segment of Southern society as her other contemporary William Faulkner in *Absalom! Absalom!* Her novel rests on a woman's great love for her land and her son, but it also contends with the destructive possibilities inherent in such strong emotion. This novel, as a literary record of Southern life, can expand the choices within the canon for both high school and college teachers who wish to teach about the important and continuing social changes that began in the South at the end of the nineteenth century. Another serious consideration for teachers who are hard pressed (and who isn't?) is Beidler's knowledgeable and evenhanded introduction that approaches *Rachel's Children* from several possible interpretive stances. He has done much of our preparation for us in a masterful manner.

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ACTE to You

Peggy Swoger, President

Here is the news from across the state.

1991 Goals

Your Board of Directors has adopted several goals for the 1991 year which we hope will involve the entire membership. We will present a new constitution at the general meeting in March for discussion and adoption by ACTE members. The draft of this constitution includes a rotation system for board members so that new board members representing all teaching levels from across the state will infuse the board with new and exciting ideas.

Another goal is to double our present membership. The first priority will be to reach former ACTE members whose membership has expired. Former members have received a letter reminding them that their membership needs to be renewed, and current members should have received a membership card. At the March meeting during AEA, we will announce details of a membership campaign which will reward ACTE members and school systems who recruit other teachers as members.

Other goals concern expanding the professional leadership of ACTE in Alabama. We would like to identify three priority areas that need immediate attention. A growing concern among members is censorship. Therefore, it seems reasonable and right to appoint a SLATE (Support for the Learning and Teaching of English) committee whose mission is to act as a "clearing house" for disseminating information on censorship to teachers and school systems who request it and to survey Alabama's English and language arts teachers about censorship matters in their locales.

The two most often stated concerns of English teachers are teaching load and class size, especially when teaching writing. Therefore, another SLATE committee should be appointed to focus on these concerns. Its task would include collecting and disseminating research information on the relationship of class size and student learning and on the amount of writing being attempted in Alabama's schools. Again a survey of English and language arts teachers about class size and the amount of writing being done would be very helpful in getting our message out to education leaders and legislators.

Professional Growth of ACTE

The ACTE can be a force for improved education in this state, and we teachers must find time in our very busy days to advance our commonly held ideals. During the last two years we have expanded our activities to include a high quality journal that gives our teachers professional information and provides them an opportunity for publishing their ideas. We have, this year, reinstated the *ACTE Newsletter* (send your information for the *Newsletter* to John Staik, 109 Ladywood Lane, Bessemer, Alabama 35023 in January and May).

Another change is that we are rotating our fall conference to different geographical areas and schools. By taking our conference into the schools, we educators have an opportunity to examine English and language arts programs first hand. During the last several years we have visited a suburban high school (Mountain Brook High School); two urban high schools (Lee of Montgomery and Parker High of Birmingham); and a K-8 magnet school (The Academy for Science and Foreign Language in Huntsville). Both ACTE and NCTE promote the idea that being professionals means involvement in how our schools function along with how we, as individuals, function in our classrooms.

NCTE Resolutions

At the NCTE conference in Atlanta in 1990, resolutions passed may guide us to other priority areas we wish to address in Alabama. NCTE is recommending "the use of alternatives to standardized tests for assessing student learning" and calling for "new efforts to recruit, guide, and retain teachers from the nation's diverse cultural groups." NCTE strongly recommended "alternative forms of assessment, such as portfolio assessment and holistic reading of writing for teachers in all academic disciplines." Also resolved was "that NCTE encourage and support its affiliates in their efforts to recruit ethnically and culturally diverse educators for membership and leadership roles." Send your ideas and suggestions for priority items that ACTE should address to me (Peggy Swoger, 2071 Montreat Circle, Birmingham, Alabama 35216).

ACTE Member Writes Best 1990 *English Journal* Article

Congratulations to ACTE member **Julie Welch Wentworth** of Opelika Middle School! Wentworth, a seventh- and eighth-grade English and language arts teacher is the *English Journal* winner in the Junior High division. Her article, "'A Whole Lot' of Learning Going On in an Urban Environment," won best article of 1990 in the Junior High division and was published in the January 1990 *English Journal*. Wentworth accepted her award at the Secondary Section luncheon during the NCTE conference in Atlanta. In the NCTE convention news release, she is quoted as saying: "Writing isn't just a teaching assignment for me; it's something I do; it's one of the reasons I teach. Writing is important to me, not just as a teacher but as a person. I know what writing can do for my students because I know what it has done for me. Personally, it has taught me how to make sense of nonsense and peace of turmoil. Professionally, it has shaped the way I deal with my kids."

Call For Manuscripts

Alabama English is seeking manuscripts for publication in its subsequent issues. We are particularly looking for discussions of classroom method and educational philosophy in the teaching of reading, writing, and literature at all grade levels from kindergarten through college. These articles can range in length from 1250 to 4000 words. We also are interested in publishing teaching tips about classroom assignments, short poems that are directly related to teaching and other professional experiences, and essays discussing professional concerns at either a national or a state level. Teaching tips should be 1000 words or less, and essays about professional concerns should be 250 words or less.

All submissions should be typed double space. Please send three copies. If you want your manuscript returned, please enclose a self-addressed mailing envelope with postage attached by a paper clip.

All manuscripts should follow the guidelines in the most recent edition of the *MLA Handbook*.

Submit manuscripts to the following address:

Isabelle Thompson, Editor
Alabama English
Department of English
Auburn University, Alabama 36849

To Join the ACTE

To join the Alabama Council of Teachers of English and receive a subscription to *Alabama English* with your membership, send $10 and your name, school affiliation, and mailing address to:

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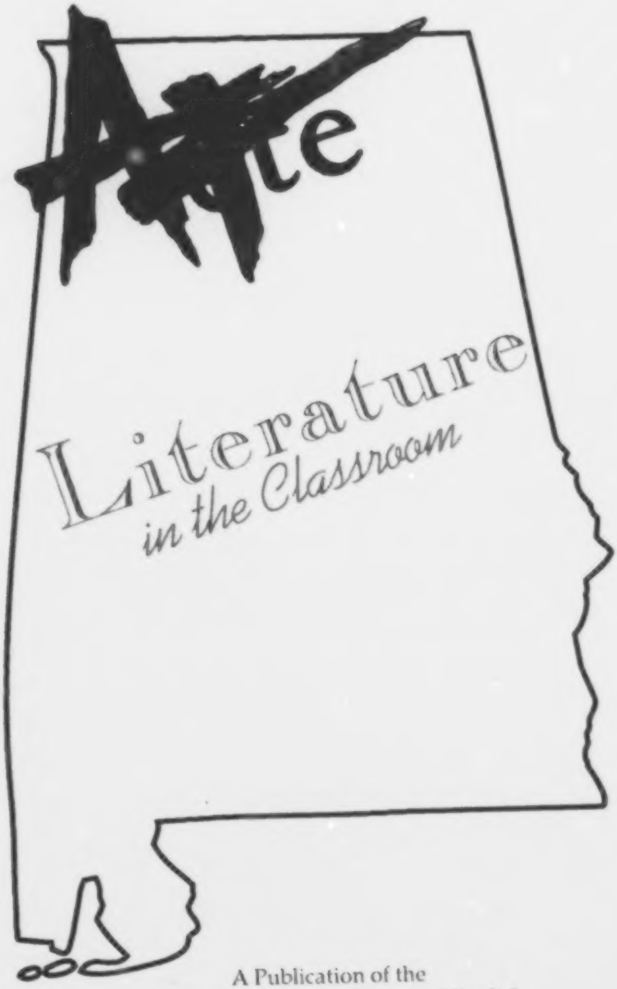
ALABAMA ENGLISH

Fall 1991 • Volume 3 • Number 2


Literature
in the Classroom

A Publication of the
Alabama Council of Teachers of English
in cooperation with Auburn University.

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ALABAMA ENGLISH

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in cooperation with Auburn University Extension and Auburn University
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Subscriptions: Subscription to *Alabama English* is included in the annual ACTE membership dues renewed each fall. To join the ACTE and receive a subscription to *Alabama English*, send your name, address, and school affiliation along with a check for $10.00 to Martha Wall, 221 Kent Drive, Homewood, Alabama 35209. *Alabama English* will be published twice a year, spring and fall.

Submissions: *Alabama English* welcomes manuscripts from 1250 to 4000 words long about current theory and practice in the teaching of reading, writing, and literature at any grade level; manuscripts approximately 1000 words long as "teaching tips"; short poems that are directly related to teaching and other professional experiences; and short essays approximately 250 words long about professional concerns. All manuscripts should be typed double space, and three copies should be submitted. For return of manuscript, enclose a self-addressed envelope with stamps attached by a paper clip. Send submissions to Isabelle Thompson, Editor, *Alabama English*, Department of English, Auburn University, Alabama 36849. Suggestions for book reviews should be sent to the review editors.

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Volume 3 Number 2 Fall 1991

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Constitution

Editor's Introduction

Mary Ann Rygiel, Guest Editor

Each issue of a journal begins far before the harvest.

The planning stages of this issue date back to the summer of 1990, with a discussion of the need for an issue concerned with literature in the classroom. Once the call was disseminated, manuscripts came forth from the good and likely soil of Alabama classrooms—classrooms at all levels and from points all around the state. Now that the issue is complete, I hope readers will gather many good ideas from its pages.

In what follows, Susan Villaume and Susan Housel show readers how the whole language approach works in the elementary classroom; Joan Nist suggests ways of including humor literature in readings for elementary children. Readers will also find new ways of approaching drama, non-fiction, adolescent literature, and art which accompanies classical texts in the secondary classroom. From Betty Burgess readers will learn how to use collaborative learning in the literary critical study of drama in the classroom; this approach makes the article a nice complement to Neal Lester's suggestions for making students sharpen their sense of dialogue, setting, and timing in drama by encouraging them to write brief plays based on familiar stories such as fables. Readers who enjoy using nonfiction in the classroom will find blue-ribbon suggestions in Kay Whaley's article. Readers who remember the fine arts pages found in older literature anthologies have a treat in store in Ken Procter's article on the links between art and literature. Near the end of the issue we come from the sunny warmth of Susan Housel's classroom to the cooler air of Mary Ann Tighe and Charles Avinger's title: "What Do You Do When They Haven't Read Their Assignment?" Not to worry. Tighe and Avinger have the remedy for what we hope is only an occasional lapse in the classroom. Nevertheless, the title reminds us that no matter how wonderful the words in the assigned reading are, they remain inert words if left un-read. In the book review section readers will encounter discussions of current books which deal with philosophical issues and theories underlying various classroom approaches.

One surprise to me as guest editor was the lack of articles on the old staples of the secondary and college English classrooms: poetry, short stories, and novels. The shift of writers' attention to such areas as nonfiction and adolescent literature may reflect the changed consciousness of the profession which was discussed in lively fashion in the Spring 1991 issue of *Alabama English*. Even if this shift does not mean that the old consensus canon is being abandoned, it does seem to signal an enlargement of that canon. Both articles on the elementary classroom suggest that we adults have something to learn from the tastes and preferences of elementary students as individuals and as young communities of readers.

When I first came to Auburn from the Midwest in 1972, I heard the expression "high cotton" for the first time. The wife of a creative writer in Auburn University's English Department explained this phrase to me, drawing on her childhood in the Mississippi Delta to do so. It refers, of course, to a happy time in a farmer's life: the time when the crop is ready, luxuriantly so. With this fall issue on literature in the classroom, I feel we're in "high cotton."

A Community of Readers

Susan Kidd Villaume and Susan McIntosh Housel

Susan Kidd Villaume is an assistant professor of reading at Auburn University. She has published articles on children's literacy in Research in the Teaching of English *and* Applied Psycholinguistics. *Recently she was awarded Phi Delta Kappa's Leadership Award (Auburn University Chapter) for her participation in learning partnerships with classroom teachers.*

Susan McIntosh Housel has taught elementary school in Alabama for 17 years. She has taught in Dothan, Homewood, and Opelika. Presently she is teaching third grade at Wrights Mill Road School in Auburn. Recently Susan was recognized as the Outstanding Elementary Teacher for Auburn City Schools and for District 2 of the State of Alabama.

We stretch out under tables, flop over chairs, nestle into closets, and read.

We laugh, giggle, question, and argue as we share a common book.

We clump into small groups, huddle in pairs, and chat about the different books we are reading.

We chew on our pencils, wrestling with our individual thoughts as we write about what we are reading.

We are a community of readers.

Andy, clad in his swimsuit, bounded over to a surprised teacher-educator who was spending a lazy summer day at the pool. Without even a "hello-how-are-you," he announced, "I've read three books since school was out. Let me tell you about them." As they talked together, she thought back to the third-grade community of readers to which she belonged.

In the spring of 1990, a teacher-educator (Susan Villaume) and a third-grade teacher (Susan Housel) began talking. They discovered they shared a common belief that teachers of reading need to be concerned not only with teaching children how to be skillful readers but also with how to be responsible readers who find reading personally meaningful. They felt that such readers come from environments, or "communities," where time is provided for reading and talking about books. Specifically, they wanted children to be provided with much time to read, opportunities to make choices as to what they would read, opportunities to respond in meaningful ways to their reading, opportunities to create a positive sense of community, and a predictable structure that allowed for these opportunities (Hansen).

Although Housel's classroom already featured children's literature and opportunities for literature extensions, it also featured the familiar sequence of assigned basal stories, skills lessons, and workbook pages. She was frustrated by the mixed messages being sent to the children. On one hand, reading was an enjoyable and purposeful experience; on the other hand, reading was a program to complete. She was ready to take a risk and restructure her reading program. She found help and support in her colleague, Susan Villaume.

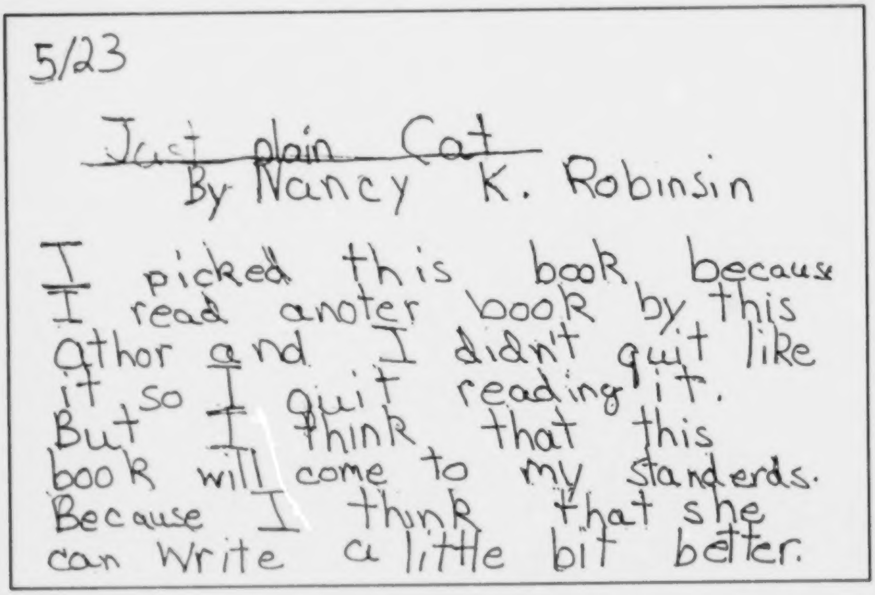
Villaume, although committed to reading instruction which was purposeful and meaningful, did not have a classroom of children. She shared her views on reading instruction with pre-service teachers at Auburn University. Moreover, this commitment had evolved since she left her elementary classroom and her traditional methods of reading instruction. She knew that she lacked the practical experience of day-to-day decision making in the reading approach to which she was committed. She also was ready to take a risk and face 29 third graders on a daily basis. And she found help and support in her colleague, Susan Housel.

These two teachers, an experienced third-grade teacher and a teacher-educator, accepted the challenge of creating a classroom community where children would become skillful, responsible, and joyful readers. Together they began implementing a reading workshop approach. The basic components of this approach are Read Aloud Time, Read Alone Time, and Share Time. During Read Aloud Time, the teacher and the children gathered together to read and discuss a common book. During Read Alone Time, the children chose and read their own books. During Share Time, the children shared what they were reading in a conference with the teacher, in Literature Circles with other children, or in their Reading Notebooks with themselves. The Reading Workshop was accompanied by a Writing Workshop, which consisted of similar components, but it is the Reading Workshop that is the focus of this article. (For further explanation of the workshop approach, see Atwell; Hansen).

Twenty-Nine Children Becoming More Responsible

The third-grade teacher used to assign the 29 children reading selections. Then she stopped. The children were invited to select their own books. Some chose books that were too hard, and they stared at overwhelming print. Peter picked up an impressively thick book and remarked, "This should last me all year!" Some chose books knowing that they could finish them quickly and "be done." The teachers noticed these frustrations and talked to the children about how to select a book that was "just right." They talked about the reasons to read easy books as well as difficult books. They talked about when it was appropriate to abandon a book. And they talked about their enjoyment of books. The 29 children gradually began to feel comfortable choosing their own books. As shown on page 3, Morgan wrote about his reasons for choosing a book.

Katie remarked that she liked her book because it was about a girl whose family was divorced, just like hers. She felt some of the same feelings. Dale picked his book because Bobby had read it and told him that it was good. Even Peter, after two weeks of searching, found a suitable book and settled in under a desk to read. The two teachers

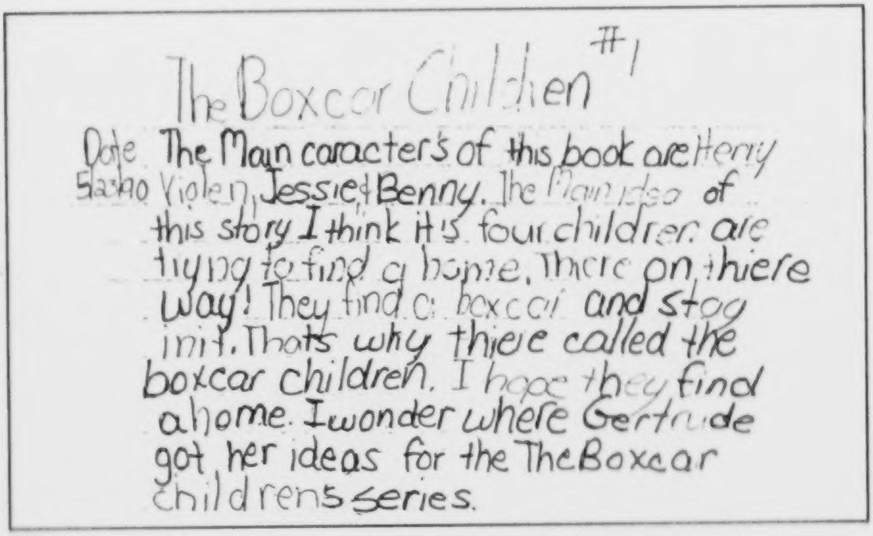


5/23

~~Just plain Cat~~
By Nancy K. Robinsin

I picked this book because I read anoter book by this athor and I didn't quit like it so I quit reading it. But I think that this book will come to my standerds. Because I think that she can Write a little bit better.

Morgan's reading notebook for *Just Plain Cat*



The Boxcar Children #1

Date 5/23/90

The Main caracter's of this book are Henry Violen, Jessie & Benny. The Main idea of this story I think it's four children are tiying to find a home. There on thiere way! They find a boxcar and stay init. Thats why thiere called the boxcar children. I hope they find a home. I wonder where Gertrude got her ideas for the The Boxcar childrens series.

Keith's reading notebook entry for *The Boxcar Children*

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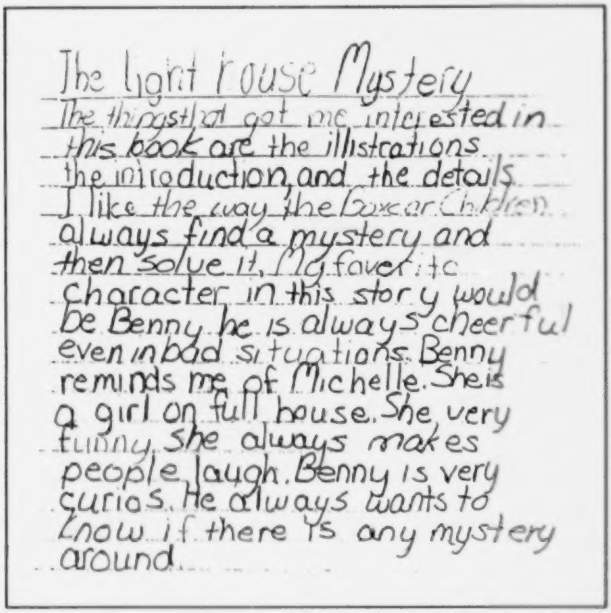
looked at each other and smiled. The children were choosing their own books and showing commitment to them. They were becoming more responsible.

The third-grade teacher used to orally quiz the 29 children to check their comprehension. Then she stopped. She knelt beside them as they read and invited them to "tell me about what you're reading." The 29 children stared at her blankly. "It's about this girl," one child attempted. The teacher waited, but the child waited too—for another question. The teacher began restructuring the discussions that followed Read Aloud Time. She asked open-ended questions like "What did you like about this book?" She didn't always follow an answer with another question. Sometimes she just propped her chin on her hand and responded, "Hmmm." Then she waited for another child to respond. Soon, the teacher found that the 29 children weren't waiting for her questions during conference time. When she knelt beside them, they started talking about their books. The two teachers listened and smiled. The children were responding in personal ways to their books. They were becoming more responsible.



The light house Mystery
The things that got me interested in
this book are the illstrations,
the introduction, and the details.
I like the way the Boxcar Children
always find a mystery and
then solve it. My faverite
character in this story would
be Benny he is always cheerful
even in bad situations. Benny
reminds me of Michelle. She is
a girl on full house. She very
funny she always makes
people laugh. Benny is very
curios. He always wants to
know if there is any mystery
around.

Keith's reading notebook entry for *The Lighthouse Mystery*

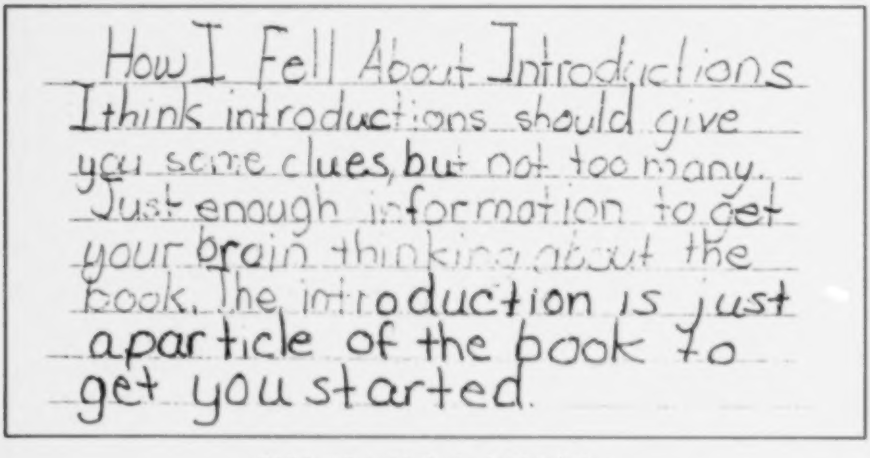
The third-grade teacher used to hand out worksheets for the children to practice the comprehension skills described in the basal manual (for example, identifying the main idea, problem / solution, character traits). Worksheets became less common. More time was spent with the students' Reading Notebooks. In this notebook they wrote about what they were reading. One child wrote, "I am reading *The Boxcar Children*," but then he was stuck. The teacher reviewed with the children the kinds of things they had discussed when they read books together. The children became more confident. Keith first wrote the paragraph shown on the previous page in his notebook. Later he wrote the one shown above.

The two teachers read excitedly, then grinned at each other. The children were thinking on their own. They were naturally addressing reading skills such as the ability to identify a main idea, an author's purpose, and character traits as they responded in their Reading Notebooks. And they were using their participation in discussions to guide these responses. They were becoming more responsible.

The third-grade teacher used to use charts and workbooks to teach the skills lessons outlined in the teacher's manual for the basal reader. Then she stopped. She did talk to the children about strategies, but it was usually in the context of books that they were reading. One day the teacher reread the beginnings of three different books. Then she and the 29 children talked about introductions. Leah said introductions were important "because that's the first thing that you read. If it's not good then you won't keep reading." Thomas said that introductions tell "a little bit about the book but not too much." Bradley said that he liked the way Tom Birdseye wrote the introduction of *Airmail to the Moon*. Lauren said she really liked the way her friend Rebecca was writing the introduction in her story about the woods. Later the teacher asked the children to write about introductions. Some of their thoughts are shown below and on page 6.

The two teachers had to go tell their colleagues. The children were realizing that they were authors, that they engaged in the same writing process as published authors. They were becoming more responsible.

The third-grade teacher used to direct all the discussions in the reading groups. Then she stopped. She invited the children into small groups that she called Literature Circles to talk about the books that they were reading. She walked around and listened but tried not to interfere. Many of the children



How I Fell About Introductions
Ithink introductions should give
you some clues, but not too many.
Just enough information to get
your brain thinking about the
book. The introduction is just
aparticle of the book to
get you started.

Kristin's reading notebook entry about introductions

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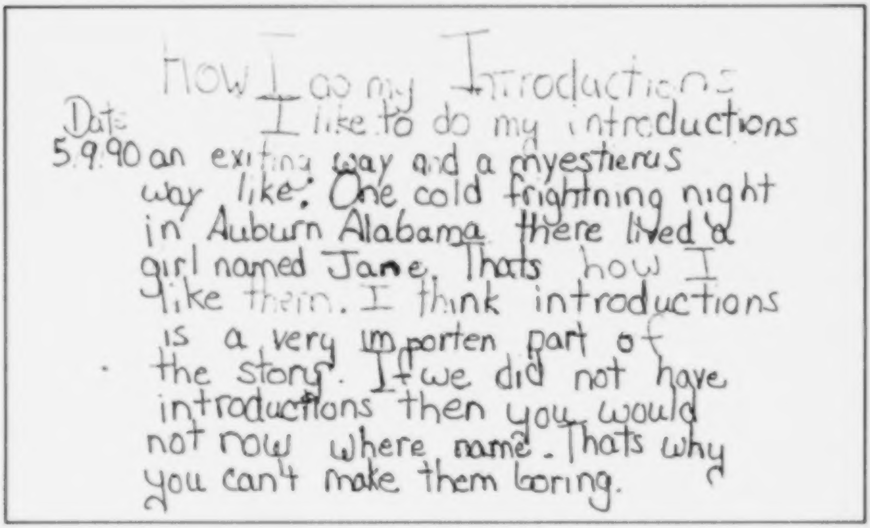

How I do my Introductions

Date: 5.9.90

I like to do my introductions
an exiting way and a myestierus
way like: One cold frightning night
in Auburn Alabama there lived a
girl named Jane. Thats how I
like them. I think introductions
is a very importen part of
the story. If we did not have
introductions then you would
not now where name. Thats why
you can't make them boring.

Jane's reading notebook entry about introductions

politely took turns summarizing their books, but nobody really listened. Jill said she didn't like Literature Circles because nobody paid any attention to her. Steven said Literature Circles were boring. The teacher spent time talking about how to listen. She talked to the children about looking people in the eye; she talked to them about listening with their whole bodies—not just their ears; she talked to them about listening so they could ask questions. Periodically she discussed with the children the kinds of questions to ask each other. The children not only became more comfortable in their Literature Circles but also became more supportive of each other. The two teachers listened to Robin talk to her friends about *Julie of the Wolves*, one of the books that her mom had bought her.

Morgan: Have you read any of the other books?

Robin: Not yet.

Jill: Do they concern animals a lot?

Morgan: Why did you pick this book out of that big collection?

Robin: I don't know. I think it's 'cause for one thing it's a Newbery Medal. For another one I like wolves.

Morgan: Were any of the other books Newbery Medals?

Robin: No.

Morgan: Okay.

Jill: So probably that would give you a clue whether it's good or not.

Jill: So probably that would give you a clue whether it's good or not.

Robin: Yeah.

Morgan: Yeah, it won the Newbery Medal. For illustrations or for the writing?

Robin: Caldecott is for illustrations. Newbery is for writing.

Morgan: Oh yeah.

Jill: Well as far as you have read, on the back of the book it says she was lost, has she already run away?

Robin: At the beginning she runs away and it starts out when she was in the wilderness.

Morgan: Was she really forced to run away?

Robin: She was real unhappy.

Morgan: She didn't like her parents or something?

Robin: No. She's 13 and it's tradition to get married and she didn't like her husband.

Jill: She's 13 and she's married?!

Robin: It's tradition.

Morgan: Is this a true story?

Robin: No, not really.

Jill: In the story did she like wolves or something?

Robin: Yeah.

Morgan: Is that why she went to live with them? She didn't really want to go.

Robin: She didn't really know about the wolves but she just found a pack of wolves and thought maybe she could get food from them and they started to be her friends.

Morgan: Is it really fiction or just a little bit fiction?

Robin: It could happen but it is fiction. It hasn't happened yet.

Morgan: It doesn't have any monsters in it—that's *real real* fiction.

Robin: Not any monsters. It could have been real but it's not.

. . . .

The two teachers listened in amazement. They had to go tell the principal. The children were initiating and sustaining relevant book talk on their own. They were becoming more responsible.

Two Teachers Becoming More Responsible

Both teachers had taught reading in the elementary school by using a skills-based basal reading program. In moving toward a workshop approach, the teachers continued to rely on their professional knowledge of reading strategies appropriate for third graders as the backdrop for instructional decision making. But the teachers added another component: observation of children in the reading process. Helping children learn to make appropriate book choices and to make personal responses to reading became as important as teaching decoding and inferential reading strategies. By making decisions about reading instruction that extended beyond the skills delineated in the basal reading program, the two teachers were becoming more responsible.

Both teachers had "taught" reading by presenting skills and then assigning reading selections and workbook pages. In the workshop approach, they realized the importance of sharing their own literacy with the children. Central to the reading program was Read Aloud—a time when the teacher shared her enthusiasm and expertise with the children. During this time, the teacher engaged the children in "mediated" learning which provided scaffolds, or frameworks, for independent reading (Vygotsky 104). For example, the teacher invited children to predict what would happen next, to use the context to bring meaning to unknown vocabulary, and to connect to personal experiences. These processes could then be internalized and used by the children to make their own reading more personal and meaningful. In an interview, Kristin commented that what the teacher was doing when she was reading aloud was just what the children were supposed to do when they "read in their heads." She added that she enjoys reading now because "it takes me off to another world. I'm inside the book." By acknowledging their own literacy processes and sharing these with the children, the teachers were becoming more responsible.

Both teachers had grouped children for instruction according to reading ability. In the workshop approach, the children were given the responsibility and freedom to select their own books; they responded by choosing a range of reading materials. Children read often, read more, and read better. Children no longer were made to feel that they were superior or inferior to anyone else. By helping students to make choices for themselves and by recognizing the value of self-esteem in a reading program, the teachers were becoming more responsible.

Both teachers had used group discussion to quiz students on comprehension. In the workshop approach, group discussion provided the opportunity to teach collaboration strategies. Children were encouraged to focus on each other rather than on the teacher. They were encouraged to initiate discussion topics, to ask each other questions, and to look at the person speaking. These strategies could then be used to collaborate in small groups such as Literature Circles when the teacher was not present. In an interview, Blake commented that in the group discussions he learned how to "glue to" the person sharing and "clue in" on how that person felt about the book. Kristin observed that these discussions "helped me get ideas about the book by listening to what other people thought about it." By realizing the importance of community collaboration in extending thinking about books and by helping children build scaffolds for interacting with each other as they talked about books, the teachers were becoming more responsible.

Both teachers had measured reading achievement using traditional basal and standardized tests. In the workshop approach, through observation of children involved in the reading process, they became aware of the limited capacity of these tests to address reading development. The teachers noticed that Katie was becoming a resource for advice on what to read next. They observed Lauren's conscientiousness about keeping her friends from "rambling" during Literature Circles. They noticed the way Bobby kept making connections to other literature. They noticed that Peter had finally found a suitable book and was "engaged" with it. They saw Caitlin struggling to ask the right kinds of questions to help Ben share his book more coherently. The teachers marveled over the range of literacy strategies that the children exhibited and blushed at the years of reading test scores recorded in their grade books. As they began working on sharpening their observational skills and exploring alternative methods of evaluation, they showed that they were becoming more responsible.

Finally, the teachers saw that the members of the reading community were not only skillful readers but also responsible and joyful readers. The children could choose their own books, they could commit themselves to a book, and they could respond in natural ways to their reading both in their Reading Notebooks and in their Literature Circles. Most importantly, they enjoyed reading. Once "freed" to pursue personal literacy rather than a sequence of reading skills, the children became vocal in their support of the workshop approach and the responsibility it involved. In an interview, Robin commented that it was "a real honor" to be in a classroom where the children had so much responsibility. She added that the Reading Workshop "in my opinion . . . releases children and lets them be free. They [the children] would much rather do this than those skimpy little language books." She offered a word of encouragement for teachers: "It [The Reading Workshop] made us get our hopes up—it made us feel that it [reading] was not only fun but important." In taking a risk and exploring an alternative to skills-based reading instruction, the teachers were becoming more responsible in their efforts to help children become skillful, responsible readers who find personal meaning in reading.

Acknowledgment

The authors extend thanks to the 29 children in Mrs. Housel's Reading / Language Arts class 1989-90. They also thank Blake Cleveland, Robin McGee, and Kristin Mann for their personal reflections. Special thanks are extended to Mrs. Emily Lacy, principal of Wrights Mill Road School in Auburn, Alabama, for believing teachers should grow and encouraging them to do so.

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Nominations and Applications for Editor of *Alabama English*

The Publications Committee of Alabama Council of Teachers of English seeks nominations and applications for editor of *Alabama English*. This state NCTE-affiliate journal publishes two issues per year, in fall and spring. It publishes articles related to methods and philosophy of teaching reading, writing, and literature in elementary schools, secondary schools, and colleges and universities; reviews of books, software, and classroom materials; announcements of workshops, conferences, and other such events; and, occasionally, short poems that are directly related to teaching or to other professional experiences.

The editor is responsible for editing and production of the journal. Although not involved in directly soliciting manuscripts from individuals, the editor is responsible for organizing solicitations and for identifying topics for special issues. Letters of nomination / application should not only describe the qualifications of the editor but also the likelihood of institutional support in the form of office space, word processing equipment, secretarial support, and / or released time from instruction.

The new editor will be selected in Spring 1992 and will assume responsibilities of editor for the Spring 1993 issue. The term of the editor is four years and is renewable.

Letters of nomination or application should be sent **no later than February 15, 1992** to:

Dorothy G. Grimes
Chair, Publications Committee
Alabama English
English Dept., St. 6432
University of Montevallo
Montevallo, Alabama 35115

Children's Choices: Picture Books with Humor

Joan Nist

Joan Nist is a professor and member of the Honors Faculty at Auburn University. A member of Phi Beta Kappa and Phi Kappa Phi, she has received awards to the International Youth Library in Germany and for study tours of the USSR and China. In 1987, she was presented the first Alabama Library Association award for intellectual freedom, and in 1991 is an Alabama Humanities Foundation speaker on "Children's Rights and the First Amendment." Nist has been Visiting Scholar at the Conference on Literature and Hawaii's Children and has presented papers in Australia and England.

The first books which children encounter, from preschool through the early grades, are usually in the format of the *picture book*, where text and pictures are of equal importance. The artist elaborates upon the writer's text rather than merely reflecting it, thus creating imaginative visuals parallel to the words. A number of awards have been created for authors and artists in the picture book genre, some honors bestowed by adult critics and others by children themselves. In selecting books to read and to honor as favorites, adults often select serious books while children select humorous ones.

In 1938, the publisher Frederic G. Melcher instituted the Randolph Caldecott Medal award, which since then has been presented annually "to the artist of the most distinguished American picture book for children published in the United States during the preceding year" (American Library Association 1). Teachers and school librarians / media specialists have been active in using these works with pupils from kindergarten through third and fourth grades, thus giving children opportunities to experience books which have been judged artistically outstanding. The criteria for the award apply to the artwork rather than the text and have often tended to be interpreted by the award committees (selected from members of the American Library Association) in favor of gallery-type art. Recently, criticism has been leveled at the committees for this narrow application: they have been urged to consider words as well as pictures and to foster the interrelationship between text and illustrations. Critics have included Cynthia Rylant, Newbery Honor winner and author of a Caldecott Honor book text, and Anita Silvey, editor of *The Horn Book*, the oldest American periodical devoted to children's literature.

The "high seriousness" of committee judgment in the selection of Caldecott art appears to apply as well in the case of humor. A sample examination of adult vs. child perception and reception of humor in picture books has been made, comparing Caldecott Medal recipients with books which have been voted favorites by children themselves, in this case, the winners of the Georgia Children's Picture Storybook Award. Children read from a list of titles selected by Georgia teachers and librarians / media specialists. This procedure allows for adult quality-control while it also enables child readers / listeners to make final choices. Caldecott decisions, by contrast, are made by the librarian committees without learning the opinions of the children who read the books and within a year of publication, too soon to determine trends of child response.

In the first 15 years of the Georgia award (1977-1991), during which more than 1,594,574 children participated, 13 of the winners were humorous. Of the Caldecotts during the same period, however, only one—*Fables*—can be described as humorous, while four others have slight humor elements—*The Glorious Flight*, *Noah's Ark*, *Jumanji*, and *Song and Dance Man*. Fantasy alone, which is an ingredient in nine of the Caldecott books, does not result in humor.

The 13 humorous favorites selected by the Georgia children show a comic range. Three treat school situations: *Herbie's Troubles*, about overcoming a bully; *My Teacher Sleeps in School*, about learning that teachers have home lives, too; and *Miss Nelson Is Missing*, about disciplining a classful of misbehavers. Two of the books deal with family activities. Walter dreams up (or down) a floor-crashing response to his father's order of *No Jumping on the Bed!* *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* depicts the humorous horrors of sibling rivalry, parental inattention, and friendly betrayal and uses the title phrase as refrain:

> There were lima beans for dinner
> and I hate limas.
> There was kissing on TV and I hate
> kissing.
> . . . It has been a terrible, horrible, no
> good, very bad day.

Five of the Georgia award-winning picture books center on animals. *Max, the Bad-Talking Parrot* misunderstands something said about him but also shows himself a rhyming hero, uncovering a burglar. Huge Pinkerton of *Pinkerton, Behave!* flunks his obedience training school but still proves himself a canine hero. The other three animal works enter the realm of fantasy: *The Tailypo*, a mock-horror ghost story; *Doctor De Soto*, a witty satire of mouse dentist treating patient (pun intended) fox; and *Big Bad Bruce*, a tale of a rowdy bear who gets his deserved come-uppance—or shrinkdownance—through Roxy the witch's spell:

> "One drop of dwindling. Two blurps
> of belittling.
> A smidgeon of minikin. A half
> teaspoon of twurp. . . "

The other three humorous works chosen by Georgia children have to do with food, which, like school, family, and animals, is a common and favored subject for young children. *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* combines the appeal of a little animal with food, going in sequential style from cookie and milk through childhood activities like drawing a picture back to milk and cookie. *The Sweet Touch* draws from both Midas myth and Sorcerer's Apprentice tale to create a preschooler's fantasy about how too much sweet can prove sour. A grandfatherly tall tale is served up in *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs.* Reminiscent in diction of Carl Sandburg's *Rootabaga Stories,* the structure of this book is a spoof on weathercasts.

> Dinner one night consisted of lamb chops, becoming heavy at times, with occasional ketchup. Periods of peas and baked potatoes were followed by gradual clearing, with a wonderful Jell-O setting in the west.

Teachers who use picture books in the classroom recognize the special relationship between adults and children involved in the reading of these works, most often read *to* rather than *by* the pupils. This way, the picture book functions as an audiovisual without mechanical intermediary: an adult reads the verbal text aloud, while the child listeners look at the pictures, which are integral to the work rather than merely illustrative. As Sheila Egoff, a Canadian scholar of children's literature, has stated, the picture book, "the genre which seems to be the simplest actually is the most complex, deploying two art forms, the pictorial and the literary, to engage the interest of two audiences (child and adult)" (248).

An examination of Caldecott Medal and Georgia Children's Picture Storybook Award books offers evidence to support the teachers who provide their young students both with the artistic, mostly serious Caldecott books and also with humorous picture books. It encourages others to give children the chance to experience the humor which they have indicated as a major component in books they enjoy. A national organization sponsoring reading implies in its title (Reading Is Fun-damental) that reading not only is fundamental but also can be fun. As Newbery and Wilder Award-winning author Beverly Cleary, whose humorous works children in grades three through six read avidly, has said: "I feel that comedy is as illuminating as tragedy—more so for younger readers who may be frightened or discouraged by tragedy . . . " (558).

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Caldecott Medal Winners, 1977-1991

Author/Illustrator	Title	Year Published	Year of Award	Genre	Grade Range	Humor
Margaret Musgrove/ Leo and Diane Dillon	*Ashanti To Zulu*	1976	1977	informational	2-5	no
Peter Spier/(Jacobus Revius)	*Noah's Ark*	1977	1978	Biblical	K-2	slight
Paul Goble	*The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses*	1978	1979	fantasy	1-3	no
Donald Hall/Barbara Cooney	*Ox-Cart Man*	1979	1980	realistic	N-2	no
Arnold Lobel	*Fables*	1980	1981	fantasy	2-4	yes
Chris Van Allsburg	*Jumanji*	1981	1982	fantasy	1-3	slight
Blaise Cendrars/Marcia Brown (tr)	*Shadow*	1982	1983	fantasy	1-3	no
Alice and Martin Provensen	*The Glorious Flight*	1983	1984	informational/ biography	K-2	slight
Margaret Hodges (Spenser)/ Trina Schart Hyman	*Saint George And The Dragon*	1984	1985	fantasy	2-5	no
Chris Van Allsburg	*The Polar Express*	1985	1986	fantasy	K-3	no
Arthur Yorinks/Richard Egielski	*Hey, Al*	1986	1987	fantasy	1-3	no
Jane Yolen/John Schoenherr	*Owl Moon*	1987	1988	realistic	K-2	no
Karen Ackerman/ Stephen Gammell	*Song And Dance Man*	1988	1989	realistic	1-3	slight
Ed Young	*Lon Po Po*	1989	1990	fantasy	K-3	no
David Macaulay	*Black And White*	1990	1991	realistic/fantasy	3-6	no

Georgia Children's Picture Storybook Award, 1977-1991

Author/Illustrator	Title	Year Published	Year of Award	Genre	Grade Range	Humor
Judith Viorst/Ray Cruz	*Alexander And The Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*	1972	1977	realistic	K-3	yes
Lorna Balian	*The Sweet Touch*	1976	1978	fantasy	P-2	yes
Bill Peet	*Big Bad Bruce*	1977	1979	fantasy	K-3	yes
Harry Allard/James Marshall	*Miss Nelson Is Missing*	1977	1980	realistic	1-3	yes
Joanna Galdone/Paul Galdone	*The Tailypo: A Ghost Story*	1977	1981	fantasy (folklore)	1-3	yes
Steven Kellogg	*Pinkerton, Behave!*	1979	1982	realistic	K-2	yes
Carol Chapman/Kelly Oechsli	*Herbie's Troubles*	1981	1983	realistic	K-2	yes
Judi Barrett/Ron Barrett	*Cloudy With A Chance Of Meatballs*	1978	1984	fantasy	1-3	yes
William Steig	*Doctor De Soto*	1982	1985	fantasy	1-3	yes
Marianna Mayer/Michael Hague	*The Unicorn And The Lake*	1982	1986	fantasy	1-3	no
Leatie Weiss/Ellen Weiss	*My Teacher Sleeps In School*	1984	1987	realistic/fantasy	K-2	yes
Laura Joffe Numeroff/Felicia Bond	*If You Give A Mouse A Cookie*	1985	1988	fantasy	K-2	yes
Patricia Brennan Demuth/Bo Zaunders	*Max, The Bad-Talking Parrot*	1986	1989	realistic/fantasy	K-3	yes
Tedd Arnold	*No Jumping On The Bed!*	1987	1990	fantasy	K-2	yes
Hudson Talbott	*We're Back! A Dinosaur's Story*	1987	1991	fantasy	1-3	no

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Teaching *A Raisin in the Sun* Using the Team Specialist Approach

Elizabeth Burgess

Elizabeth Burgess has over 15 years of teaching experience, including the past nine years at Auburn High School. Her previous assignments were at Grissom High School, Huntsville High School, and Bellview Junior High School in Pensacola, Florida. She has also taught at Auburn University and at Auburn University at Montgomery. In 1990 she was chosen Secondary Teacher of the Year for Auburn City Schools. She received the BS, MEd, and EdD degrees from Auburn University.

In June 1990, she was a participant in a four-week NEH institute at the University of Alabama, "American Literature and Art." The institute provided the impetus for this article.

Lorriane Hansberry's play, *A Raisin in the Sun,* celebrated its thirtieth anniversary last year. In an era of overt racial tension Hansberry created a play about black characters who faced a social crisis without romanticizing them. The play spoke directly to its original audience just as *The Crucible* had addressed the horrors of McCarthyism at the beginning of that decade. Yet, like *The Crucible, A Raisin in the Sun* is illuminating and meaningful to today's audiences as well. It has become a popular work to teach in high school classes.

A teacher can use numerous approaches in teaching *A Raisin in the Sun.* I suggest one that is appropriate not only for teaching this play but also for teaching other works common in high school classes. *A Raisin in the Sun* is especially adaptable to the "team specialist" approach. In this approach, the class is divided into several different teams, with each group paying close attention to one specific viewpoint on the play. The number of teams and the objective of each team depend on the size of the class as well as on the maturity, interests, and ability levels of students in the class. The teams I will discuss are the sociological / economic team, feminist team, literary analysis team, psychological team, and comparative literature team.

Sociological / Economic Team

The sociological / economic team is responsible for identifying the play's details that pertain to the social conditions of the Youngers. The objective of this team is to identify the social themes of the novel and to show

how the playwright interweaves social protest in with the other aspects of the play. What information does Hansberry give the audience about the Youngers's background and their present status? How realistic is she in describing them? Does Hansberry indicate where the Youngers got the money not only to finance Beneatha's education but also to pay for her expensive hobbies (horseback riding, photography, guitar lessons)? Is it likely for a family of the Youngers's means to have afforded a $10,000 life insurance policy? What would this policy be worth today, and how much would the monthly premiums be on such a policy?

This group also notes the information that Hansberry provides about the furnishings in the Youngers's apartment, the sanitation in the building, and other details about the neighborhood. What prospects do the Youngers have for escaping their status? How does society regard them? Do they seem to be typical of what might be expected of a poor Chicago Southside working-class black family in the late 1950s?

This team also looks at legislation that governed housing regulations, especially the Supreme Court case initiated by Hansberry's father. The students also examine the policies of clubs and organizations within the local community that still retain restrictive membership policies. They can relate the play to the civil rights movement during which it was written. The scene with Mrs. Johnson, cut from the original Broadway production but included in the 1988 television production, boldly points to the violent protests that occurred in the late 1950s. This scene is available in the 1988 Signet paperback.

Students in this group can review some key events that had directly preceded this play—the landmark 1954 Brown-vs-Board of Education decision outlawing school segregation, the death in 1955 of Emmett Till, a 14 year old from Chicago (the setting of the play) who was brutally murdered while visiting relatives in Mississippi, the Montgomery bus boycott of 1955-56 which Rosa Parks sparked by refusing to move to the back of a city bus, the closing of Arkansas schools in 1958 by Governor Faubus to avoid integration, and the summer riots in many northern cities during this period. It is also appropriate for this team to view programs such as the PBS series *Eyes on the Prize*, which details the civil rights struggle in America.

Feminist Team

The feminist team examines Hansberry's portrayal of women and the attitudes of the male characters in the play toward the female characters. This team searches for evidence in the play about the attitudes and personalities of the male and female characters and about the ways the characters interact with each other. Is it typical for Mama to be willing to settle for less than Walter? Is the disparity in their dreams because of the generation gap, or is it the result of gender conditioning? Does Mama fail to appreciate Walter's dream because of the different struggle that her generation faced merely in surviving in the South, or is it because, as a woman, her priorities and needs are different?

The other characters can also be examined from the feminist point of view. The students on this team can contrast Ruth and Beneatha and their views of being women. What does being a woman mean to each of them? Who is more believable? What values and flaws can be found in each character? Does Hansberry seem to favor one, or does she give value to both? Which of the two women is more appealing? This group may consider if Hansberry herself seems to be a feminist not only in her depiction of her female characters but also in the way she portrays the men in the play.

Walter is presented as the most complex character in the play. We are allowed to see him develop more than any of the female characters. From the feminist point of view, the group pinpoints some of his flaws, especially in his treatment of Ruth. They note how he deliberately undermines her authority when she refuses to give Travis 50 cents for school, money that she said they simply "don't have." Walter also makes Ruth feel guilty about the pregnancy and repeatedly insults her. His complaint that "we one group of men tied to a race of women with small minds" is typical of his overall attitude of male supremacy. He belittles Beneatha's plans to be a doctor and makes his mother feel guilty over refusing to turn the insurance money over to him, bitterly accusing her of butchering up his dream. When things turn his way, however, his disposition toward all three women becomes sweeter. In the final scene, after the bitter disappointment and agony of losing the money, he speaks to Mr. Lindner of the women in his life with pride, being considerably less chauvinistic than he had seemed earlier.

Hansberry has reserved the role of male chauvinist supreme for George Murchison. Students will have little trouble exposing his extremely offensive remarks to Beneatha, ordering her to get dressed and telling her not to think, that good looks are all that she needs. Beneatha's dismissal of him as a "fool" should also point to Hansberry's low regard for men of this type. Although liberal and certainly more sensitive to Beneatha's feelings and dreams than George, Asagai also demonstrates that he is capable of traditional sexist attitudes when he remarks, "Between a man and a woman there need be only one kind of feeling" and that "for a woman it should be enough."

Literary Team

The literary team follows a more traditional approach in analyzing the play. Members begin by examining the structure of the play and noting its similarities and differences with a classical tragedy. They show the progression from exposition to rising action, turning point, falling action, climax, and resolution. What is the "ray of false hope" that is planted during the falling action? Does Hansberry prepare the audience for the climax? How is the resolution different from the ending of most tragedies? By carefully examining the ending of the play, the students recognize that the play is not nearly as upbeat as it may appear on the surface.

This group also discusses the language of the play, including the rhythms and diction of passionate black speech which Hansberry has masterfully replicated in the dialogue of the characters. The team members identify effective figures of speech and contemplate whether or not certain phrases like, "In my mother's house there is still God" or "He finally come into his manhood today . . . kind of like a rainbow after the rain . . . , " are too contrived. They should also decide if the check is a specious *deus ex-machina* in the play, as C.W.E. Bigsby maintains, or if it is a legitimate device used to advance the plot. They should discuss Hansberry's methods of characterization, her use of dynamic and static characters, and her use of foils.

The group members function as critics and base their evaluation not only on their reading of the play but also, if possible, on the performance of the play using either the 1961 movie or the 1988 television version. Viewing both versions allows students not only to critique and compare character portrayals but also to note differences in the text since the television version restores a key scene cut from the Broadway production. If time and resources are available, the drama could also be compared and contrasted with the musical version, *Raisin*, produced in 1973 by Robert Nemiroff, Hansberry's ex-husband and literary executor.

Psychological Team

A fourth team explores the psychological aspects of the play, particularly the mental states of the characters which alter appreciably as the play progresses. This group also concerns itself with the search for self-awareness and identity of these characters as Hansberry allows them to reveal their dreams and frustrations to the audience. What is a certain character's psychological state? How do the various characters perceive themselves? Do they have realistic or unrealistic self-concepts? What gave Mama the courage to go alone to a real estate agency and buy a house in a white neighborhood? Why does she entrust Walter with all of the remaining money? How does she feel about herself and her family? How does she react when Walter loses the money?

Ruth seems to be a typical, hard-working black wife and mother, but she also has some unique characteristics. How does she react to her pregnancy? Is having an abortion the "typical" response for a black woman in her era to consider as a possible solution to this problem? How is she caught between wanting to be a loving, supportive wife and having to view their situation from a realistic standpoint, which often puts her in the unwelcome position of being an unresponsive nagger? How does she seem to define herself as a woman?

Ruth's counterpart, Beneatha, also deserves attention. How does Beneatha's view of herself differ from Ruth's self-analysis? Is she truly an "independent modern woman"? If so, why does she comply so easily to George's command for her to change clothes, and why does she have her hair cut after Asagai had criticized her for mutilating it? Why does she turn so quickly from one interest to another? How does she seem to be caught between liberal ideas and traditional values? In short, does she really know herself as well as she thinks she does?

This team also explores the way George Murchison and Joseph Asagai think of themselves. George's inflated sense of superiority, based on his financial status, and Asagai's sense of philosophical and intellectual superiority, based on his idealistic spirit of African nationalism, seem to be deliberately contrived by Hansberry to give the audience a broad view of black individuals.

The psychological team may need to spend more time analyzing Walter's psychological make-up than that of any other character. Is he a childish dreamer? The students look for evidence in the play that reveals Walter's self-concept. Does his "true self" come through more when he is drunk or sober? Why does he behave as he does? Can we find a rationale for his actions? Does he truly, as Mama contends, come into his manhood by the end of the play? Students may debate whether or not Walter matures and point to evidence in the play to support their viewpoint.

It would be interesting for this team to consult with some specialists in the field—professional psychologists, psychiatrists, psychology teachers (or students), guidance counselors, and others with special training in human behavior—to offer additional insights on the mental and emotional states of the characters in the play.

Comparative Literature Team

The comparative literature team looks for parallels between *A Raisin in the Sun* and other works. A natural point of comparison in American literature classes is to compare the search for the American dream as it is explored by various characters in the play with the way this theme is treated in other literary works. Hansberry herself compared Walter to Willy Loman, pointing out the materialistic ideal held by both characters. Using works of fiction, the students could note differences between Walter and Bigger Thomas, who also grew up in a Chicago tenement house 20 years earlier, developing a destructive anger, hatred, and frustration that did, finally, explode. Many of the students will also be familiar with *The Great Gatsby* and *The Grapes of Wrath* where the American dream is featured in dramatically different ways. Does Walter want what Gatsby had? Are there similarities between Mama and Ma Joad?

This group may compare the play with another work of social protest, showing how two or more writers handle this type of literature. Hansberry can easily be contrasted with Richard Wright since she openly rejected the overt violence and bitterness of his work although she did want the audience viewing *A Raisin in the Sun* to be fully aware of the brutal, horrible discrimination that existed. The students can note the different approaches used by these writers and discuss which approach they believe is most effective. They could also examine a social protest play like *The Crucible*, written only a few years earlier, and discuss the parallels between the plays and the social conditions they were exposing. They should note how both plays contain universal ideas that keep them meaningful for today's audience.

This play can be linked with other literary works in still other ways. The search for identity by both Walter and Beneatha can be compared with similar struggles by Huckleberry Finn and by Henry Fleming. Both Walter and Henry are desperately trying to prove their manhood, one by becoming an independent businessman, the other by fighting bravely in war. The racial oppression and attitudes dealt with in *Huckleberry Finn* and *To Kill a Mockingbird* could be compared with those expressed in this play. This team has almost limitless possibilities and could, if desired, be subdivided into several groups.

Conclusion

The team approach easily adapts to other literary selections. I use it with several different works during the year and rotate the objective of each team when a new work is begun so that the students can all gain experience with approaching literature from a number of perspectives. The length of time for the teams to examine a selection will depend on such factors as the number of works to be studied during the year, the complexity of the selection, the resources available, and the ability of the students. The teams spend two to four days working in their groups with an additional day for group reports of 10 to 15 minutes each.

I assign students to their particular teams before they begin reading a selection and give each team some guiding questions related to their focus. The entire class takes an objective test as a reading check on the due date. (For some works I divide the selection into two to four sections with reading quizzes of 25 to 50 points per section.) Only then does the team analysis begin. The teams can meet as each section is completed, or, if the entire work is due on one date, they can begin their team meetings at that time. In addition to the teams I have suggested, other teams can be added and some deleted to fit the interests and needs of a particular class. For example, a creative writing and philosophical approach team can be added.

The team approach engages the students more directly with literature and helps them make a better connection between what they read and the world in which they live. It enables them to relate a single work with other works they have read so that they can see the continuity of experience as presented by writers in different eras and from different backgrounds. It allows them to express their feelings and ideas more freely than they would normally do in a large-group lecture or discussion setting. Because each group reports on its findings, it gives all students the opportunity to see a much larger picture of a single work. At the end of the year students will not only have gained the traditional values associated with reading good literature, but they will also have learned a variety of ways of approaching a literary selection. Finally, they will have sharpened their critical thinking skills, enabling them to enjoy and explore on their own the multiple levels of meaning within a given work.

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My Professional Concern

Pam Argo
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A persistent professional concern I have is that teacher training at the undergraduate level is strong in theory but weak in practicality. Over and over I hear comments from other teachers about how little the courses they took prepared them for actual encounters with students.

When I think of my undergraduate days, I can only recall *one* class, Young Adult Literature, that prepared me for the classroom. I had to read 100 children's books and 10 novels, all in a ten week period; in addition we researched authors, wrote summaries, and made bibliography cards. I still draw upon authors I learned about when I am planning both writing and reading assignments for students in my classroom now. I still remember falling asleep in Measurement and Evaluation. Maybe that is why someone has to explain the SAT score sheet to me every year. Someone decides which courses are important enough to make the teacher education program; I wonder how many of these people have been in the classroom for an extended period of time.

The memories of other classes I took have all faded away, but the memories of my feelings of inadequacy during my first few years of teaching are still vivid.

Becoming Better Readers Dramatically

Neal A. Lester

Neal A. Lester has taught at Mount Zion High School in Georgia and at Vanderbilt and the University of Montevallo. Currently he teaches courses in African-American literature and modern drama at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa. His book, Ntozake Shange: A Critical Study of the Plays, *is under contract with Garland Publishing.*

Whenever plays are taught in the English classroom, whether at the high school or college level, many students perceive play reading to be more difficult than reading short stories, novels, or poems. In one sense they have a point: reading narratives is easier because the author generally tells the reader everything the reader needs to know—what a character thinks and feels at a specific moment, with often extensive descriptions of physical settings both spatially and temporally. To a great extent, narrators imagine, interpret, and organize action and dialogue for the reader; the reader merely has to follow the leader somewhat passively. Dramatists offer these same details to readers of plays, but the reader of a play has to work actively at putting details of dialogue and stage directions together simultaneously while keeping plot details clear. Perhaps more importantly, the reader of drama has greater freedom of imagination when dramatizing the moment on his or her own mental stage.

The literary skills incorporated in reading narratives are broadened when students try their hands at converting simple narratives to play form. In so doing, students not only become aware of the intricate concerns of "real" playwrights but also become the directors of their own productions through personal interpretation. They emerge from this literary / dramatic experience realizing first that each production of any play, whether on Broadway or in the high school classroom, is but one of many possible interpretations and, second, that individual details of any production must conjoin tightly toward that particular interpretation.

This article will suggest classroom strategies for teaching drama by having students write plays from familiar narratives. It emerges from a series of workshop presentations I conducted with other college and high school teachers who were looking for a practical, easily adaptable approach to presenting drama in their classrooms.

To introduce the basic notion of transferring a narrative to play form, I start with something familiar—a short selection from *Aesop's Fables*. For the

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workshop presentations, I have selected the fable of the North Wind and the Sun:

> The North Wind and the Sun disputed as to which was the most powerful, and agreed that he should be declared the victor who could first strip a wayfaring man of his clothes. The North Wind first tried his power and blew with all his might, but the keener his blasts, the closer the Traveler wrapped his cloak around him, until at last, resigning all hope of victory, the Wind called upon the Sun to see what he could do. The Sun suddenly shone out with all his warmth. The Traveler no sooner felt his genial rays than he took off one garment after another, and at last, fairly overcome with heat, undressed and bathed in a stream that lay in his path. Moral: Persuasion is better than Force. (*Aesop's Fables* 164).

Having prefaced the exercise with a very brief discussion of what makes a play different from a narrative story and how the reading of the two genres is both alike and different, I ask students simply to convert this fable into a play. Students can be given anywhere from 20 or 30 minutes to an entire class period to write the production—depending upon what the teacher expects in terms of details and completeness. This activity would also work as an overnight homework assignment. An immediate follow-up exercise might be to have students revise their scripts before considering the possibility of performing some of them. Individual conferences or even group peer reviews might help students in revising their dramatic efforts before sharing them with the entire class.

There are a number of reasons for selecting a fable to illustrate this basic concept of playwriting. Not only do fables have a complete action in terms of beginning, middle, and end, but they are also short and relatively simple to understand. If students do not understand the original narrative, they will be unable to put the narrative into dramatic form. I selected this particular fable because it has characters whose personalities can be developed, and it has no dialogue. If a narrative has a lot of dialogue, students are naturally more limited because the author's words are the only ones attached to the characters. If the fable has some dialogue but not a lot, the students can make the characters more complete by adding details concerning gestures, movements, tone of voice, and the like.

From this simple narrative emerge versions of plays that evidence students' feel for dialect, character development, setting, costuming, set, props, movement on the stage, and general theme. In other words, students, whether they know the stage lingo or not, know that characters have to say something to each other. While the narrator tells generally what is said between the two characters, the students provide the specific dialogue and in doing so make the fable come alive, often through comic touches. What gender is each character? Does gender affect the play's meanings? For example, a female Sun and a male Wind might be a way of discussing sex-role stereotypes. Another consideration is the location of the fable. This consideration will allow discussion of setting in terms of its significance or insignificance to the students' plays. What will the characters' tone of voice be—jocular, annoyed, boastful, sarcastic? Will the characters use slang or formal language? How will the characters be costumed? Will there be sound effects? How can sun rays be dramatized on the stage? Does the play version need the Traveler to be a vocal character, or will it be sufficient merely to talk about and see this character? Will it matter whether the Traveler is male or female? How will the Traveler be dressed? Where will the Traveler be located—on stage or off—in relation to the other two characters? What will the Traveler be doing while the other two characters talk? Will the Traveler be cognizant of the contest, as in a published play version of this fable (Cullum 28-30)? If so, might this awareness alter the fairness of the contest should the Traveler be prejudiced?

The students will also have to consider how to arrange the stage and what props to use. One student suggested that the Sun carry a large sun lamp and that the Wind carry a huge electric fan. What will one character be doing while the other character is trying to convince the Traveler to remove his cloak? Another potential problem that students have to resolve is how to show the Sun's more gentle rays as compared to the Wind's more forceful puffs. How will the might of the Wind be performatively distinguished from the warmth of the Sun? Certainly other critical and interpretive questions will be raised by students, and other performative angles introduced. This freedom of imagination should be encouraged. (Examples of student plays based on this fable follow this article.)

To take the dramatic experience even further, the students may perform their script as a play. Teachers might have students stage some of their productions in the classroom. Since plays are generally written to be performed and not just read (closet dramas and radio dramas are notable exceptions), the second phase of this approach will greatly enhance students' full participation in the dramatic experience. They will need to make their productions as polished as possible, with lines memorized and blocking patterns worked out. Although this part of the project may intimidate some students, they are generally enthusiastic about sharing their individual efforts in group performance and are often amazed at their own creative talents. The process of writing the plays and performing the scripts helps students to develop more confidence in their own critical and interpretive abilities. They are also fascinated to see just how completely different various interpretations can be of the same narrative seed.

Such an approach can be modified essentially for any grade level—elementary through college. The more sophisticated the students, the more sophisticated the productions will be. Perhaps the key difference in student levels will be seen in the use of language. Once the simple fable exercise has been mastered and enjoyed, teachers might move on to longer and more sophisticated narratives. Some short stories will work well because of their manageable lengths, and students can work in groups on the longer pieces.

In keeping with this overall comparison-contrast approach to literature based on genres, the teachers might have students consider interpretive differences between professional stories that have been converted to play versions and novels that have become movies. Consider, for example, the range of possibilities for this approach:

Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (novel) and drama by Kristen Laurence

Sherwood Anderson's "I'm a Fool" (short story) and drama by Christopher Sergel

Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* (novel) and drama by Christopher Sergel

Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (novel) and drama by Ann Coulter Martens

Stephen Vincent Benet's "By the Waters of Babylon" (short story) and drama by Brainerd Duffield

Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (novel) and drama by Jane Kendall

Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (novel) and drama by Charlotte Chorpenning

Guy DeMaupassant's "The Necklace" (short story) and drama by Jay Reid Gould

Charles Dickens's *Nicholas Nickleby* (novel) and drama by Tim Kelly

William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" (short story) and drama by Joseph Robinette

Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* (novel) and drama by David Rogers

F. Scott Fitzgerald's "Babylon Revisited" (short story) and drama by Laura A. Shamas

F. Scott Fitzgerald's "Bernice Bobs Her Hair" (short story) and drama by D.D. Brooke

Robert Frost's "Death of the Hired Man" (poem) and drama by Jay Reid Gould

Bret Harte's "Outcasts of Poker Flat" (short story) and drama by Edward Darby

Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Feathertop" (short story) and drama by Maurice Valency

O. Henry's "The Cop and the Anthem" (short story) and drama by March Bucci

Homer's *The Odyssey* (epic) and dramatization, *Ulysses: A Drama in Prologue and Three Acts*, by Stephen Phillips

Washington Irving's "Rip Van Winkle" (short story) and drama by Charlotte Chorpenning

Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery" (short story) and drama by Brainerd Duffield

Shirley Jackson's "The Leader of the People" (short story) and drama by Brainerd Duffield

Daniel Keye's *Flowers for Algernon* (novel) and drama by David Rogers

Rudyard Kipling's "Rikki-Tikki-Tavi" (short story) and drama by Susan Carle

John Knowles's *A Separate Peace* (novel) and drama by Nancy P. Gilsenan

D.H. Lawrence's "The Rocking Horse Winner" (short story) and drama by Clark Fuller

Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (novel) and drama by Christopher Sergel

Carson McCuller's *A Member of the Wedding* (novel) and drama also by McCullers

Herman Melville's *Benito Cereno* (novella) and drama by Robert Lowell

Herman Melville's *Billy Budd* (novella) and drama by Robert Chapman

John Niehardt's *Black Elk Speaks* (novel) and drama by Christopher Sergel

George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (novel) and drama by Peter Hall

Alexander Solzhenitsyn's "One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich" (short story) and drama by Robert Brome

John Steinbeck's "The Leader of the People" (short story) and drama by Luella McMahon

John Steinbeck's *The Pearl* (novel) and drama by Warren Frost

Henry David Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience" (essay) and dramatization, *The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail*, by Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee

Mark Twain's "The Diary of Adam and Eve" (short story) and drama by Marc Bucci

Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* (novel) and drama by Jane Kendall

Mark Twain's *The Prince and the Pauper* (novella) and drama by Anne Coulter Martens

Eudora Welty's "Lily Daw and the Three Ladies" (short story) and drama by Ruth Pery

Perhaps the greatest reward from such an approach to introducing drama in the English classroom is that it arouses students' creative energies. It also forces students to raise critical questions about their own readings in terms of interpretations and literacy completeness. More importantly, it helps to move students from a passive reading of narratives to an active involvement in the reading process imaginatively and performatively.

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The North Wind and the Sun: A Play

by Rodney Upshaw

[Setting: Outside an apartment complex in Birmingham, Alabama.]

North Wind: What's up, Sun?

Sun: Nothing, North. What's up with you?

North Wind: Nothing here. I was just chilling. Get it—"chilling?!" Ha! Ha!

Sun: Yeah—real funny, sorta like a heart-attack.

North Wind: What's wrong with you? Are you in a bad mood?

Sun: Well, not really. I'm just so bored.

North Wind: Well, I have the perfect solution for that. How about a little competition?

Sun: What'd you have in mind?

North Wind: See that fellow over there next to the pool?

Sun: Yeah.

North Wind: Well, I'll bet you a season summer against a season winter that I can make him take off his coat.

Sun: "Make" him take off his coat—as in "force" him to?

North Wind: You got it. I'll "make" him.

Sun: You've got a bet.

North Wind: (Blowing slightly so as to stir loose dirt) Watch my dust!! (Approaches the fellow) Hey! Little wimp, take off the coat and give it to me!

Fellow: Don't you wish?! I'm not a wimp, and I'm definitely not giving you my coat!

North Wind: Oh, so you want to be a big boy! (Throwing blow of cold air) I said TAKE OFF THAT JACKET, PUNK!

Fellow: (Pulling coat on tighter and thinking) Oh, it's getting cold. (Attention back to North Wind) I said "no!" So, why don't you leave me alone?

North Wind: (Going back over to the Sun) Boy, he's tougher than I thought. No, no one can get him out of that coat.

Sun: Are you sure? Let me try. (Approaches Fellow) How are you doing, my good chap?

Fellow: Fine and you, sir?

Sun: Oh, I'm just fine. Nice weather we're having don't you think?

Fellow: Sure is.

Sun: It's rather warm for that coat, don't you think?

Fellow: As a matter of fact, I was just noticing that. (Pulling off his coat) I think I'll take a dip.

Sun: Well, I'll be seeing you. Take your dip, and have a nice day, neighbor.

*****

Persuasion is Better than Force: A Play in One Scene

by Lyn Hillman

[The scene is a busy Manhattan street. An eight-foot high backdrop crosses the stage with store fronts painted on it. Above the backdrop a black back-drop reaches from floor to ceiling five feet behind the eight-foot high backdrop. Two ladders are positioned behind the eight-foot high backdrop so that the Sun and Wind characters are seen above the street scene against a black backdrop.]

(As curtain rises, the Sun and Wind are looking down on the street, watching the crowd shuffling by. Wind is stage left; Sun stage right.)

Sun: Have you ever noticed how people never worry about the weather anymore, Wind?

Wind: Yeah. It seems that Elements like us don't have any effect anymore. People leave their homes prepared for anything—Rain, Heat, Wind . . . . What am I saying? No one can be prepared for Wind, right?

Sun: I don't know. I thought for sure no one could be prepared for Earthquake, but I saw him in the Unemployment Office yesterday. He got laid off because he still couldn't stop San Francisco in, ah, what year was that?

Wind: 1901.

Sun: No, I think it was in 1949.

Wind: Can't be. Clark Gable was in a movie about it in the 1930s.

Sun: 1849, you goon!

Wind: Oh, but I will never be out of work. I can make people squirm still. After all, I'm Wind. You remember Hurricane Hugo? I worked with him on that job.

Sun: That doesn't prove jack, Jack. You couldn't do that without the help of the Hurricane Union.

Wind: Could too. I'll prove it.

Sun: How?

Wind: What are the three basic human needs?

Sun: Visa, MasterCard, and American Express?

Wind: No, Einstein,—food, clothing, and shelter.

Sun: So?

Wind: Pick one, and I'll make one of those pathetic humans down there give it up.

Sun: Okay . . . . (Thinks out loud) Food's too easy—he'll blow it away. Shelter—too hard; even I couldn't do that. (He challenges) Clothing—make the yo-yo in the blue hat strip.

Wind: No problem. Watch and learn. (The Wind begins to blow. As the Wind picks up speed, all passersby are blown off at stage right, leaving only the man in the blue hat. He grabs his hat, tightens his overcoat and pushes his way off at stage left.)

Sun: (Laughing) Watch and learn? Learn what? How to graduate from the Wind School of Element Unemployment?

Wind: Okay, if you're so bright, you do it.

Sun: No sweat. (The sun begins to shine as people who have returned from stage right begin to walk to stage left. As they walk, they begin to disrobe. By the time they have exited stage left, the stage is covered in clothing.)

Sun: Nah, Nah. See, schoolboy, it's easy. All you have to do is make them want to take off their clothes.

Wind: So? At least when my way works I wreak havoc. Your way looks like a casting call for *Oh! Calcutta!*

Sun: So what, Wind! Does that mean I was unsuccessful? I think not.

Wind: Okay. Okay. You win, but don't tell anyone. It will ruin my reputation.

Sun: Your secret's safe with me.

Wind: I gotta go home. (To himself) That made my emphysema act up.

Sun: Later. (Wind exits down ladder behind backdrop. After Wind leaves, Sun looks around and picks up the nearby phone. He dials frantically and waits for an answer.) Hello, *National Enquirer*?

(Stage goes black; curtain closes.)

Remember Nonfiction: Stir up Some Southern Preserves in the Classroom

Kay Whaley

Kay Whaley has taught English at Eufaula High School since 1980. Her experience includes working with students in grades 9 through 12 on levels ranging from remedial to college prep and honors. She is faculty sponsor for the school's literary magazine and newspaper and was awarded a Dow Jones Teacher Fellowship for development of a local journalism curriculum.

"I really notice sentences when I read now," Jennifer remarked at the end of first period last spring.

"Read this article, Mrs. Whaley," Reshma, a junior, directed. "This person is not a writer."

"I think Paul needs to add a paragraph of transition right here," Juliet advised as she read entries submitted to the literary magazine.

I looked. She was right. These students and others like them are becoming discriminating writers and readers. They are weaning themselves from dependence on teacher as infallible evaluator, honing tastes for individual styles, defining—and sometimes redefining—what is good writing. Eleven years of teaching English to a potpourri of students of differing ages and abilities have taught me not to skip the section in the anthology labeled "Nonfiction" and to treasure-hunt in magazines like *Southpoint, Life, Newsweek, Time, The New Yorker, Southern Living, Wigwag*, and the student magazines *Literary Calvacade* and *Writing* for contemporary models. I am convinced that paying attention to contemporary nonfiction in the classroom creates more confident writers and more avid readers.

I first must convince my students of the truth of the adage "We are the stories we tell." I no longer ask my tenth graders to write on the first day of class. Rather, I begin by asking them to speak extemporaneously about their most vivid childhood memory. I volunteer my own memory first, hoping that students will notice my attention to detail, vocal variation, and sense of closure. Vivid stories invariably emerge, from the tale of one student who, at age five, was inadvertently left behind by her large family at a car dealership and not missed until the family arrived home—an hour and a half later—to an idyllic memory of a group of neighborhood boys who waged pine cone wars among tangles of honeysuckle vines, armed with garbage lid shields. After we hear the stories, I lead a discussion using the following questions suggested by Beverly Haley:

-Which stories stand out?

-Which ones do we remember in vivid detail?

-What was different about the ones we still "hear" in the ears of memory?

-Could you write these stories down so that they would be just as memorable?

-What is different about oral and written storytelling? (17)

We speculate about why certain seemingly insignificant events often remain in our memories forever and about how, through time, we may gradually make sense of or attach meaning to our memories. I introduce the words "ambivalence" and "epiphany," pointing out the existence of conflicting feelings about most of our experiences and reminding students of that sudden flash of insight or recognition we occasionally experience in life.

The writer of nonfiction helps us make sense of experience. It is not difficult to locate works of contemporary essayists who write of memories that evoke meaning about life. Alabama writer Vicki Covington draws on personal experiences from her own childhood and young adulthood. In "The Disappearing South," Covington writes of loss: the loss of rural life, the loss of her mother's opal ring, the loss of connectedness to a generation past (90). Writing about the influence of her grandmother, Zelma Marsh, on her own brand of Southern prose, Covington asserts in "Telling the Story" that Southerners have "a compulsion to talk in stories. . . . If we seem slow to others outside the region, it's because we're hell-bent on taking our precious time—not just to smell the roses, but grow them, to savor, describe, arrange, analyze, adore, and if so inclined, find some way to put them in a casserole" (84). Covington speaks to the next generation of storytellers, the voices of the New South, the preservers of family history, of community tales. Covington shows that, despite the precarious nature of modern life, storytelling still preserves what is best about the South.

Students use highlighters as we mark devices in the essays: imagery, metaphor, parallelism, allusions—even sound devices, inversions, the deliberate fragment. We notice introductory paragraphs linked to concluding paragraphs and locate transitions and paragraph hooks. I point out that often a writer will develop the introduction through several paragraphs, and we search for elusive or implied thesis statements or try to outline the major divisions of the piece. We may even count numbers of words in sentences or identify the part of speech of each sentence opener. Students learn that writing, like art or sculpture, can be aesthetically pleasing, finely crafted, life affirming.

Nonfiction teaches students to see ordinary things anew. High school students need to be challenged to sharpen their powers of perception, to strive "to make the common appear novel" (Goethe qtd. in *Peter's Quotations* 212). When nonfiction writers effectively describe their environment, the people and places that have touched them, they stir the collective unconscious in each one of us. Through focusing on the use of metaphor in nonfiction, I have discovered that students find reading more pleasurable and writing about their own experiences more meaningful. Annie Dillard's "Flood," an essay taken from the Pulitzer Prize winner *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, is a selection brimming with figurative language. Dillard describes the aftermath of Hurricane Agnes near her home in Tinker Creek, Virginia, in poetic prose:

> Our creek . . . looks like somebody else's creek that has usurped or eaten our creek and is roving frantically to escape, big and ugly, like a blacksnake caught in a kitchen drawer. (149)
>
> Below me the flood water roils to a violent froth that looks like dirty lace, a lace that continuously explodes before my eyes. (151)
>
> There are so many white plastic gallon milk jugs that when the flood ultimately recedes, they are left on the grassy banks looking from a distance like a flock of white geese. (151-52)
>
> Tomatoes in flat gardens are literally floating in mud; they look as though they have been dropped whole into a boiling, brown-gravy stew. (152)

After studying Dillard's essay and reading "Sudden Storm" (Middleton 35), my students wrote about extreme weather conditions they had experienced. Tory described the building of a violent thunderstorm across the lake near his home:

> The clouds over my house that cool Friday afternoon were the color of soot on old fireplace brick.

and

> The rain slowly made its way across the lake like a gray velvet curtain.

Another student wrote about a sleet storm. Mindful of the role of vivid verbs in extending metaphor, Paul painted a vivid portrait of the clouded sky:

> High above the small Southern town, the grey-clad Confederate soldiers of the sky held the rain in bondage. The cold winds blew through the trees, beckoning the rain to emancipate itself. The clouds marched onward across the frigid morning sky until they finally burst into hordes of escaping rain.

Writing about the sky on a clear night, Todd described stars that "hang in the sky like a spider on her web."

Students who have experienced reading and writing poetic prose find the transition from prose to poetry easier. Students submit essays into which they have deliberately incorporated figurative language, and then we work on the craft of condensing. Students pull descriptive passages from their work and experiment with eliminating unnecessary words and with placing their words on the page to create a shape that looks like poetry. Then we discuss choices the poet has that the writer of prose does not have: length of lines, breaks, even divisions of words on a line, and the creative use of punctuation. Students who work to condense their own prose piece to create a poem understand more clearly what we teachers try, sometimes unsuccessfully, to tell: a poem is meaning compressed.

The weather assignment paper not only provides an opportunity for my students to learn about poetic prose, but also gives them a chance to write about some local lore and to accomplish some interdisciplinary research. Eufaula, like so many other communities in the South, hosts an annual arts and crafts weekend called Indian Summer Days. Since many of my students associate the term "Indian Summer" only with the busy October weekend, I bring in the encyclopedia definition. Together we read about this time in autumn with its rich colors and hazy afternoons. Learning that the Native Americans considered the welcomed period a gift from Cautantowwit, the god of the Southwest, sends some students in pursuit of other Native American gods and some looking skyward toward constellations and distant universes.

Thus, a writing assignment that begins as an experiment with poetic prose soon burgeons into a mini-research project in which each student becomes the expert on his or her weather subject, the emphasis still being a personal response to some aspect of the natural environment. This year at least two students were fascinated with twilight, their interest perhaps piqued by Dillard's reference to the "green ray of the sun" (17) that infrequently appears at twilight. One student wrote about adjusting to Southern winters without snow or "angel dust," as he called it. A few students wrote about the spring flood of 1990 with its destruction of property in Eufaula and its legacy of the importance of helping one another in crises. Teaching students to weave their gathered facts into their essays is much more effective than teaching the library research or term-paper—and the resulting papers are the type of nonfiction works suitable for publication in high school literary magazines.

Most importantly, writing and reading nonfiction helps students find their *voices*. Models by Andy Rooney, Robert Fulghum, Truman Capote, Dylan Thomas, and Garrison Keillor are popular with high school students. Since some of these writers have works on cassette or videotape, students struggling with the concept of voice and tone have the advantage of actually hearing the author at work. The film versions of Capote's *A Christmas Memory* narrated by Capote himself and Thomas's *A Child's Christmas in Wales* are fine companion pieces for teaching students about voice, tone, and point of view. A collection of essays by Rooney offers models for student writing that are succinct and fun to imitate. Rooney teaches students to "write as though your work will be read out loud" (Brown 65). Modeling does work: students become excited about nonfiction when they learn to recognize the familiar voice of a favorite writer in an anthology, magazine, or newspaper and when they begin to recognize the distinctive thumbprint voice of their peers.

Using nonfiction in the classroom yields many rewards: students learn an interdisciplinary approach to study; they begin to make sense of their own experiences; they acquire skill with sentences, with language, with observation; and they learn to evaluate what they read. It is a triumph fraught with struggle and practice and hard work. The students' greatest triumph, however, is the discovery that their voices can and often do make a difference. And as teachers, perhaps our greatest triumph in encouraging the writing and reading of nonfiction is in the preservation of our collective memories and in the bonds we create with our students.

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My Professional Concern

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My professional concerns are mainly in the area of academic unity. Even though all school systems use the same state adopted textbooks and state curriculum guides, test scores and studies reveal that students are not being presented the same curriculum in all area of Alabama. Even within the same counties and cities, there are major differences in the presented courses of study and requirements for each grade level.

Through curriculum development conferences and meetings, a more unified curriculum could be developed. ACTE has made major strides to help eliminate this problem. Local and state curriculum guides should be updated to meet the academic needs of the students. Coordinators for each subject area should work together to insure that all teachers in the entire state of Alabama are following the same curriculum guidelines.

To some my professional concern about academic unity may seem trivial. I feel that all educators need good, updated guidelines so that all Alabama students are presented the same material and are allowed to succeed in the same areas.

Approaching Art as an Interpretation of Literature

Kenneth J. Procter

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How might the studies of literature and art be mutually supportive in the classroom? This essay will suggest a few of the relationships between literary and artistic expression and then describe classroom experience with beginners (in this case, college freshmen)—an approach that I think may be applicable to public schools. The essay will describe how the class analyzes a pair of paintings related in theme, one by Rembrandt and one by Caravaggio, in view of the Biblical text they interpret.

Artistic interpretations of literature abound. From ancient art to modern times, artists have drawn on literature for inspired subjects. (Indeed, it is only in modern times that certain schools of Western art developed an aggressively anti-literary stance.) Nearly the whole enterprise of classical Greek and Roman art—sculpture, painting, architecture—was devoted to mythical themes. Classical mythology as a source for artists revived with the Renaissance and continues to this day (e.g., the work of contemporary realist, Jack Beal). Likewise, Christian texts have enjoyed a long history of illumination, interpretation, and reinterpretation. The artistic legacy of these two literary sources is so rich that it admits exploration by medium or theme; by stylistic period, school, or geographic area; and by individual artist. Specific examples read like a "Who's Who" of Western art history: Leonardo, Michelangelo, Raphael, Titian, . . . van Gogh, Nolde, Dali. More recent literary sources for artists also spring to mind: Shakespeare, Dante.

The second category, literary responses to particular works of art, is much more slim and, from my point of view, not very useful. Excluding criticism and historical novels such as Irving Stone's *The Agony and the Ecstacy* (on Michelangelo), examples come slowly to mind: the fifth of Rainer Maria Rilke's "Duino Elegies," on Picasso's *Family of Saltimbanques*—yes; John Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn"—yes; Robert Browning's poem, "Fra Lippo Lippi"—maybe.

The third category might be literary and artistic responses to the same subject. Although not addressed further in this essay, this kind of work is well worth exploring in the classroom. The poems of Wordsworth and the paintings of John Constable in England; or in America, the transcendentalist writers of the mid-nineteenth century and the Hudson River and Luminist schools of painting offer rich possibilities for comparison (even without delving into questions of influence). William Blake's work in word and image is a special case. Arguably his expressive means are on an equal footing, each in a sense interpretive of the other, while giving form to the subjects of mutual address.

Throughout this essay, I have been careful to use the term *interpretation* rather than *illustration* when referring to works which artists have drawn form literary sources. The distinction is sometimes fine; nevertheless, it is useful and of critical importance to the approach I take in the classroom. (In making this distinction, I follow, at a rudimentary level, a position propounded by one of my teachers, John W. Dixon, Jr., 23-25). *Illustration* tells the story, gives the setting and the characterizations. *Interpretation,* through its telling of the story and depiction of the setting and characters, explains what the story means. The distinction is really a replacement of a worn out or devalued word, for *illustration,* like *illumination* (the term for the images in medieval manuscripts), has light in its root and meant both "to adorn" and "to enlighten." The loss of this latter signification is regrettable. Generally, the more richly developed the literary work, the more likely the artist is to illustrate rather than interpret it (Dixon 25). In my view, Millais's *Drowning of Ophelia* is such a work. As such, it does not offer the possibilities for discussion found in works based on classical myth or the Bible such as the Rembrandt or Caravaggio paintings discussed below.

The approach to art as an interpretation of literature that follows is written from my point of view as an art teacher. But in practical terms, the door opens either way, either from artistic form to literary source or from literary source to artistic interpretation. Thus, while I begin with image and then examine text, a teacher of literature might begin with words and then proceed to interpretive image. Collaboration between teachers of art and literature addressing the same material might also be fruitful.

When my freshman art appreciation class is ready to examine a work of art in some depth (an approach which is almost always more fruitful than a cursory look at several works), I begin with a painting that interprets the literature of the Bible. A Biblical painting has proved to be a good starting point because the field is so rich, and the literature is at least passingly familiar to my students. Thus the subject of the work of art is also familiar. We cannot say the same thing for most mythological themes or for most historical themes. This tactic is partly motivational—when students know the story, or better, have an interest in the import of the story, it is easier to hold and deepen their interest in the class discussion.

Take a specific example, a story familiar enough to arouse and hold student interest, yet obscure enough to allow discovery and lend some freshness and objectivity to analytical and interpretive discussions: that other Last Supper, the supper after the walk to Emmaus described in Luke (24:13-30).

Surely here is the denouement of a great tragedy, a touching story of personal contact with the Master. The known is the unknown, and the unknown is revealed. To top it off, as one of the appearances after the Resurrection (and without the least intention to mock theology), it is a darn good ghost story with the potential for artistic high drama. But like much of the Bible, even with all of these potentials for storytelling, the account is written with abstract economy—the characters lack faces, gestures, and physiognomy; the setting lacks light and shadow; the narrative has a literary rather than a human pace. The story is ripe for visual interpretation.

Rembrandt is renowned for his art based on Biblical themes, Old and New Testaments. After painting *Supper at Emmaus* (c. 1628-1630), Rembrandt approached the theme again in a second *Supper at Emmaus* (c. 1648). In his second interpretation, our point of entry to the story, the two disciples sit at the corners of a small table and face into the painting towards Christ, center, who emanates a supernatural light that illuminates much of the dark but spacious room (our sense of spaciousness owes chiefly to the ample arched vault high above the group). A standing servant looks on as Christ, facing us, breaks the bread, and we sense that the disciples recognize Him at last.

My approach with the class is to use "prompter" questions to promote discovery and discussion. I am convinced of the efficacy of discovery learning, and I am repeatedly thrilled with the level of questions, analysis, and interpretation that develops once students feel that a genuine question is on the floor. The trap that stymies effective discussion (and I regret the frequency with which I, unthinkingly, set the trap) is the game called "Guess My Interpretation." (For further suggestions on leading classroom discussions, see McKeachie 35ff.) Some broad questions are genuine, but too general to be useful prompters. How has the artist handled his material? What does it mean? A starter question should be specific. How do you know—how has the artist shown you—which figure is Christ? I ask this question on first look, and after a brief retelling of the story (reading comes later), but without having so much as pointed to the Rembrandt painting. Of course the students know which is Christ. White-gowned and glowing, centered and frontal, He dominates the disciples' and our attention. Only someone wholly unfamiliar with Western art would not recognize Him. What students may not realize is that their instant recognition depends on longstanding artistic conventions. We try to list these conventions: halo—well, here it is more of an aura; white robe; and facial appearance. Was Rembrandt conventional or inventive in handling the material? That is, does his rendition follow established tradition, or does it present a more personal interpretation? Beginning students cannot answer that question. At this elementary level, what I am interested in teaching is the process of approaching and thinking about works of art and not a final answer to the rhetorical question which is more properly the purview of the art historian. But we can discuss the corollary questions. How could we find out if this is conventional or inventive? The only solution is comparison, and it branches in at least two ways. First, it branches outward, to other artists' renditions, and, second, backwards, to the literary source.

At this state of the discussion, I add two pieces of information, another painting and a transcription or copy of the relevant text from Luke's Gospel. Caravaggio painted *Supper at Emmaus* (c. 1600). In this, his first version of the theme, we see a marked contrast with the Rembrandt. (Caravaggio approached the theme again c. 1606 in a late, dark style that was a major influence on Rembrandt.) The early Caravaggio is compact and dramatic. The two disciples and Christ sit close around a table, hemmed in by the frame of the picture. Again, the disciples face in and Christ faces out. Again, the servant stands. But in the moment that Christ blesses the bread, the disciple to our left rises from his chair, and the other, right, throws his arms apart in surprised recognition, one hand plunging into the depth of the painting, the other flung at us, almost out of the canvas.

After pursuing the question of Christ with an aura in Rembrandt and observing the lack of even a halo in the Caravaggio, after comparing the appearance of the two Christs and discussing the problems of generalizing from limited samples, we proceed to the text. Again, I ask prompter questions:

- Have both artists accurately followed the text?
- Have they interpreted the same moment?
- Do they show that the disciples' "hearts burned within them"? If so, how?
- How do the painted interpretations compare—with each other, with the text, with your understanding of the theology at issue?
- Do the paintings interpret the text—focus on or draw out a particular meaning in the text?
- Do the paintings represent Protestant (Rembrandt) and Catholic (Caravaggio) interpretations of the same text?
- What evidence is there in the paintings to support your conclusions? Is the evidence ambiguous or susceptible to multiple interpretations?

Answering these increasingly challenging questions (some of these questions would be more appropriate with an advanced group) requires analytical treatment of the works of arts and also requires consideration of the relevance and importance of works of art as interpretations rather than illustrations of the text. Examining the concrete richness of the visual works may well raise questions about the spare abstractness of the literary source. What are the expressive potentials and limitations of "abstract" literary descriptions? Is it valid to interpret an abstract literary passage in vivid and concrete visual form as Rembrandt and Caravaggio have done? Or does abstraction require abstract interpretation? I would think teachers of literature might guide a discussion in these directions.

In order to foster a broad-based discussion, I try to make use of small-group collaborations. Instead of starting the entire group discussing the question of the moment depicted in the two paintings, I ask that discussion begin in groups of three or so near neighbors. After sufficient time for groundwork but prior to the silence or socializing that symptomizes conclusion or boredom, we return to the large group. I am assured that most students have participated, even if I have not been part to the discussions. The large group discussion is generally the richer for it, as ideas have been tested informally prior to risking them with the whole group. My sense of the class dynamics is that as we proceed with the literature and the painting, interest is heightened because the students discover that they never knew the story meant "that," or that it meant "that" to a particular artist, or that either painting or story could hold more than one meaning. I am not concerned that the class concludes with a sense of having reached a correct or final interpretation: conflicting and complementary interpretations are, after all, debated in the scholarly discourse. And if the question of right and wrong arises or if it seems that the class is developing two complementary views, it is useful to introduce these three ideas:

- two or more views need not be mutually exclusive
- expressive forms—literary or artistic—are rarely emptied of their content in one interpretive round
- the spareness of the text need not be taken as circumscribing absolute limitations for interpretative art, but may instead confer a maximum of freedom to the artist (or to the exegete)

At any point, depending on the purposes of the class, the prompter questions could be a point of departure for an essay. The complexity of issues offers possibilities at many levels of thought, from analysis and comparison to interpretation. The timing and nature of an assignment greatly affect the level of its complexity. Halting the discussion on a question which students must address individually offers a different challenge from calling for a summary at the close of a full discussion.

The works of art are both independent from and indissolubly linked to the text—a theme in itself worth exploration. But as I pointed out, my inclusion and use of the literary source is to aid in the examination of the art. And notwithstanding whatever prior or final claims St. Luke's Gospel has on the meaning of the events at Emmaus which it describes, the words begin to explain the pictures, just at the pictures shed light on the words.

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NOTE: University Prints of Winchester, Massachusetts is a source of postcard-sized reproductions of works of art for individual student use.

My Professional Concern

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"If we came home and said we had been punished by the teacher, we got another licking." These immortal words were repeated often by my mother in reference to the school years she and her brothers experienced. Then she would explain that her dad would grumble," If that teacher punished you, *you* must have misbehaved. Your reward is another punishment at home."

Although there probably were times children of the 1920s through the 1940s were punished inappropriately at school and then had to face their parents for even more discipline, most teachers now look back in amazement that there was such public support of and *respect* for teachers.

I'm not sure what has caused the deterioration of teacher respect—changing society, relaxed moral standards—but perhaps we teachers have changed. Maybe we have become more "human," more subject to error ourselves with the changing mores of society. Perhaps the changing views of teachers are in fact due to the inhuman demands on school systems and teachers not only to teach but also to fill contact hours missed with parents, churches, and close-knit communities.

Although I'd rather be teaching in my demanding big-city school with all its vibrancy and opportunity than in my mother's one-room county school, I sometimes long for just one parent to duplicate my grandfather's rough reprimand: "If you get into trouble with that teacher again, you'll get another punishment when you get home!"

What Do You Do When They Haven't Read Their Assignment?

Mary Ann Tighe and Charles Avinger

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Pre-service English teachers are usually enthusiastic and conscientious students. They love literature, and they are anxious to teach it. But, when they begin their internships, they are quickly discouraged because their students cannot or will not read their assignments and, therefore, cannot participate in class discussions and activities. The first question the interns ask when they come back to campus for a conference is "What do you do when they haven't read their assignment?" With their fellow interns, they share the experience of assigning a story for homework and coming to class with a lesson plan they cannot follow because no one is prepared to participate. The interns agree that the next step is to threaten the class with a pop quiz, but they admit that this approach is not a very effective way to motivate students to read or to encourage enjoyment of good literature. They are frustrated and angry with their students at what seems to be an impossible situation. And at this point we can offer no immediate solution. We can tell them nothing that will solve their problem when they walk into the classroom the next day. But we can share two principles with our pre-service teachers, principles to guide them when they are teaching literature, principles that will prevent this kind of no-win situation for both teachers and students.

The first principle involves the selection of the literary text. We must select literature that appeals to student interests, that motivates them to read on, and that allows and encourages them to identify with the characters and events. G. Robert Carlsen makes this emphatically clear:

> In the search for identity the young use books, particularly fiction and biography, as a main source of information. Through them they try on different roles and sometimes discover people like themselves whom they can observe handling their lives. This may not be a proper use of literature, but it is a phase that teenagers must go through if they are to keep reading. Unless the books they read offer them experiential encounters, most will be turned off reading. (13)

The second principle involves classroom activities. Students must become active participants in responding to the literature, not passive readers and then passive listeners as the teacher or perhaps a few students explain what the story was really about. Elizabeth A. Kahn, Carolyn Calhoun Walter, and Larry R. Johannessen cite the conclusions of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, which analyzed students' skills in reading and literature and found that most students can comprehend what they read on a literal level, but too few students are able to move beyond this basic skill and learn to make inferences and to arrive at a literary evaluation which they can support with logical evidence (1). The NAEP attributes these weaknesses to classroom teaching and testing procedures. When the teacher uses lecture, does not encourage open discussion, and assesses progress with objective tests, students are given little opportunity to respond to the text, to form opinions, and to support those opinions orally and in writing (3). If we want students to begin using higher level thinking skills in responding to literature, then we must teach them to do so.

Therefore, we recommend that our interns select texts that will motivate their students and that they incorporate teaching strategies that will involve their students so they will learn to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate while reading, writing, and talking about the literature. We have found that young adult literature—both original texts and film adaptations—is an excellent way of incorporating these principles into the classroom. It can transform a class full of reluctant readers into a group of interested, involved, motivated students. This article will offer suggestions about how to select texts students want to read, how to help students learn to become active learners, and how to use films to enhance literature instruction.

Select Texts Students Want to Read

The first principle encourages the selection of texts that students will want to read. Young adult literature serves this purpose well. And when we recommend young adult literature, we do not mean a popular romance series, Nancy Drew, or the Hardy Boys. Since the 1960s, authors of young adult literature have provided us with novels and short stories that are not simply motivating for students to read. They are well written and offer much for stimulating and meaningful classroom activities. Authors such as Robert Cormier, Paul Zindel, and Sue Ellen Bridgers have given us novels with realistic characters, carefully crafted plots, a fluent style, and themes that evoke much discussion. They have given us novels that may well become the classics of future generations. It is true that some traditional classics appeal to student interests, but too many times high school students are asked to read a novel that is written far above their reading level or one that holds little interest for them. Adriane LaPointe, an assistant professor of English at Auburn University, clarified the problem while being interviewed on TSU-TV:

> I think [*Great Expectations*] would be a very difficult book to teach to fourteen-year-olds. It's not written for children. It's a book that expects from its reader a kind of adult capacity to understand the complexity of life that most fourteen-year-olds simply haven't the experience to possess.

If you object to replacing some of the classics with contemporary young adult literature, consider the alternative. Many students are assigned the classics, but never read them. Others attempt to read them, but with little understanding. The teacher may resort to reading the story to the students or trying to give a synopsis of each day's assignment. As a result, students have indeed been exposed to a classic, but most will never again, by choice, read another one. If our objectives are for students to match famous authors with the appropriate classic, to write a brief summary of the plot, and to recognize a few famous lines, then we should continue exposing students to the classics. But if we want to stimulate students to become lifetime readers, to choose and enjoy well-written literature, to make inferences and draw conclusions, and eventually to evaluate the literary merit of their selections, then young adult literature is an appropriate choice for classroom study and discussion.

Help Students Become Active Learners

A second principle in teaching literature is that students must become active, not passive learners. We offer some examples of classroom activities which engage students in higher level thinking skills along with specific young adult titles which we have used in this way.

Prereading Activities

Prereading activities are useful to introduce concepts that will emerge while reading the story. Through a series of exercises, students learn to draw conclusions, analyze the text for support, and then defend their ideas before an audience of peers. The "Romantic Love / Marriage Survey" at the end of this article is an excellent prereading activity to introduce M. E. Kerr's novel, *If I Love You, Am I Trapped Forever?* Students complete the survey themselves, then give the survey to others, asking each respondent to agree or disagree with a series of 15 statements about love. In small groups, they compare their findings and look for trends and contradictions. In Kerr's novel, the protagonist, Alan Bennett, begins his senior year confident that he and his girl friend Leah know what real love is and that their relationship will last forever. By the end of the novel, Alan has lost Leah and has observed the changing relationships in the adults that are closest to him—his mother, his father, his coach, and the older woman with whom he is infatuated—none of their relationships last forever. After students have read the opening chapters, they answer the survey again as Alan Bennett would, citing evidence in the story to support their answers. Then after finishing the novel, they again respond as Alan would, noting the changes and looking for evidence to explain these changes. At this point the class is ready to talk about character development, motivation, and relationships.

Another useful prereading activity involves scenarios. At the end of this article, we have provided a list of scenarios developed around various types of friendships. Students read and evaluate each scenario carefully, going beyond the obvious and superficial. During class discussion, it is helpful to begin drawing up a list of criteria to define friendship. This discussion prepares students to read Paul Zindel's *The Pigman*. This is the story of John and Lorraine, teenagers who, feeling isolated from their own families, develop an important friendship with each other and then with a lonely old man. When they indirectly cause the old man's death, they are forced to assume responsibility for their own actions. After reading the novel, students apply the criteria they developed for defining friendship to the relationship of John and Lorraine and to their relationship with Mr. Pignati. Students are now ready to begin a discussion of theme—what is the author saying about human nature and relationships?

Ranking situations on a continuum is another way to encourage students to support and defend their opinions. Before students read Katherine Paterson's *Jacob Have I Loved*, ask them to rank the situations at the end of this article by considering "What Makes a Good Parent?" Students meet in small groups to discuss, explore, and defend their rankings. As each group comes to a consensus, the group members report to the class, and once again students are forced to explain and defend their rankings. As students read the story of Caroline and Louise Bradshaw, they evaluate the parents of these twin sisters. At first, most students believe the parents unfairly favor Caroline because of her delicate health and musical talent. At this point, they need to analyze the events in the novel and find evidence to support their opinions. As they finish the novel, many will change their opinion of the parents, but their final conclusion is not as important as the experience they have in analyzing the characters' motives, drawing conclusions, and defending their opinions with evidence from the text.

Discussion Questions

According to James Squire, "So repeatedly do we tend to test only comprehension of details that many a student's foreknowledge of our emphasis may well limit his capacity to comprehend the larger implications of literature"(v). Discussion questions for young adult novels can be sequenced to prevent a concentration on details. One such sequence, suggested by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, involves four steps and leads students from an "engagement / involvement" response on a personal level to a check on comprehension through a "descriptive / analytic" response to "interpretation" where students begin to synthesize the information and finally to "evaluation" with students judging the literary quality of the work (Botel 4). The following questions, based on Zindel's *The Pigman*, encourage students to respond on the various levels:

1. Engagement / Involvement— (a) What parties have you attended or heard about that reminded you of the party at the Pigman's house? (b) How would you feel about having John and Lorraine for friends? Why?
2. Descriptive / Analytic—(a) How did John and Lorraine learn the truth about the Pigman's wife? (b) Describe one of the games John and Lorraine played with the Pigman.
3. Interpretation—(a) What messages does this novel project about growing old? (b) Considering the events in the story, how realistic is the saying "honesty is the best policy"?
4. Evaluation—(a) What is the effect of having John and Lorraine alternate in telling their story? (b) Are the adults in the novel fully developed or are they stereotyped? Explain.

Kahn, Walter, and Johannessen recommend a more detailed taxonomy developed by George Hillocks and Larry Ludlow, who identify a hierarchy of seven levels of questions (5). Students generally must master the first three levels of literal comprehension before moving on to the four higher levels of inferential comprehension. These levels can be sequenced and explored in a discussion of Kerr's novel, *If I Love You, Am I Trapped Forever?*

The first three levels deal with literal comprehension:

1. Basic stated information—Why were Alan's parents divorced?
2. Key detail—When Alan was visiting his father, what happened before they went to the play that changed his mood so suddenly?
3. Stated relationship—What events led Alan to suspect a relationship between Catherine Stein and Coach Luther?

The next four levels deal with inferential comprehension.

4. Simple implied relationship—Why did Alan dislike Duncan from the first time they met?
5. Complex implied relationship—Alan and Duncan seem to have changed places by the end of the novel. Duncan is now a basketball star, and he is dating Leah, the prettiest girl in the senior class. Alan is the outsider. What has caused this reversal in roles?
6. Author's generalization—At one point Alan contrasts his father with Catherine Stein. His own father abandoned his mother for another woman while Catherine resists the temptation to leave her husband for Coach Luther. Considering how the story ends, what has Alan learned about human nature and human relationships?
7. Structural generalization—Like many young adult novels, this one is told in the first person from the protagonist's point of view. Would it be more or less effective if told

from the third person point of view? Explain.

When students are required to study the classics, too often they never move beyond the first three levels in this hierarchy. The literal levels present such a challenge that they have no opportunity to experience the higher levels of inferential thinking. Because the seven levels of questions are a taxonomy, students cannot discuss Shakespeare's or Dickens's themes or styles if they have not mastered the basic stated information and key details. And for too many students this literal level of comprehension is where classroom discussion of the classics begins and ends. But with young adult novels, most students can quickly master the literal levels and move on to making inferences and supporting their conclusions with evidence from the text. They are learning to master exactly what the NAEP identified as a weakness in the reading and literature skills of most adolescents.

Use Films to Enhance Instruction

Young adult literature not only is highly motivational in its own right but also has another advantage in the secondary classroom. It is extremely compatible with the use of film and videotape, both of which can stimulate interest in literature and motivate even reluctant students to read. As Carole Cox notes, films can "trigger thinking, talking, and writing about the nature of film . . . and invite comparisons with . . . literature as documentation, as well as the subject of the film" (85). While recognizing its potential for generating high levels of student interest, English teachers are sometimes hesitant to introduce film into the curriculum for some of the same reasons they may be reluctant to teach young adult literature in the first place—questions about the legitimacy of film as a curriculum resource, perceived difficulty in incorporating film into the established curriculum, and fears of censorship problems (Fehlman 84). While these concerns are certainly valid, such problems can be overcome, and the power of the combination of young adult literature and film to motivate students makes the effort worthwhile.

The use of film adaptations of literature in the classroom invites the same kind of skepticism that the study of young adult literature does. As Joy Gould Brown notes, "Hollywood has never been noted for its literacy" (3). Yet it is relatively easy to establish a rationale for the study of film as literature. Film has a number of characteristics in common with literature. Both are "capable . . . of a coherent and reasoned treatment of a subject," both use words to communicate (even silent films, which have subtitles), and both "tell stories and make reference to 'imaginary worlds'" (Brown 22-31). Perhaps most importantly as far as adolescents are concerned:

> . . . they also share the very same basic appeal. Most of us have always gone to the movies for the same reasons we read: for escape, for fantasy, for the opportunity to identify with—even to transform ourselves into—other human beings for awhile and vicariously participate in their lives. (Brown 39)

Film, then, can be used to accomplish many of the same objectives as written literature while increasing student interest at the same time.

Film can be incorporated into a curriculum of young adult literature in a number of ways. Because of the relatively short time required to watch a film compared to reading a book, videotapes can be used to supplement an established reading list, increasing the amount of literature that can be covered in a given period of time. As Brian Gallagher observes, "today's students are 'reading' films at the kind of rate English teachers have always wished they would read books . . ." (59). In addition to allowing more literature to be studied, the use of film can facilitate the intensive study of individual authors. For example, a class might read S.E. Hinton's *The Outsiders* and then watch the film version of *Tex* (available from Media Basics Video, $69.95), or the other way around, since film versions of both books are available. An alternate approach is to show the film adaptation of a book the students have read. Class discussion and writing assignments can then center on differences and similarities between the two. Yet another possibility is to assign films for out-of-class viewing the same way a teacher would assign novels for book reports. The availability of televisions and VCRs in most school libraries makes this a practical approach even for students who do not have access to equipment of their own. A wide variety of appropriate films is now available, including *Rumble Fish* (Center for Humanities, $59.00), *Where the Red Fern Grows* (Center for Humanities, $29.00), and two versions of *Little Women* (Library Video Company—1933, $24.95; 1949, $19.95).

The use of film adaptations intensifies a concern already relevant to some young adult literature selections—the possibility of objections from parents or school authorities to the content of the films. Because much young adult literature deals with adolescent concerns and behavior in a realistic way, film versions often contain language and visuals questionable for use in secondary classrooms. Fortunately there are enough movies made before 1968 or made for television (and thus subject to fairly rigid censorship guidelines) to allow reasonably wide choice in this area. For films that might cause problems if shown in their entirety, Richard H. Fehlman suggests "quoting" films, or showing key scenes from films (such as *The Breakfast Club*) for analysis in class. In this way, according to Fehlman, segments from more films can be included, and troublesome scenes can be avoided (84).

One example of a movie adaptation that illustrates the benefits and challenges of integrating young adult literature and film is the 1983 production of S.E. Hinton's novel *The Outsiders* (Library Video Company, $19.95). Directed by Francis Ford Coppola (*The Godfather, Apocalypse Now*), this film tells Hinton's story of youthful alienation and conflict through a combination of powerful visual images, stylish direction, and good ensemble acting by a talented group of young actors, nearly all of whom became major stars in the late 1980s. A well-made film with strong appeal to teenagers, *The Outsiders* affords opportunities for analysis and interpretation similar to those found in its source material, but expanded beyond the source material in some cases. High school classes could consider the following questions during and after viewing the film. In terms of the

Hillocks and Ludlow taxonomy, the questions are all inferential. They ask the student to go beyond a literal evaluation of the text.

Level 4. Simple implied relationship—Characterize Ponyboy and Dallas. How are they alike in spite of superficial differences?

Level 5. Complex implied relationship—What are the values of the Greasers and the Socs? Why do the two groups find themselves in conflict?

Level 6. Author's generalization—(a) What does the film say about family relationships? About friendship? (b) Compare the conflict between the Greasers and the Socs to a division between two other groups you know of. Are some of the basic causes of conflict the same in both cases?

Level 7. Structural generalization—(a) How does the film present the Greasers' world as a dangerous, threatening place? What visual images support this impression? (b) Explain the visual symbolism in Ponyboy and Johnny's journey following the murder. What meanings do the golden sunlight, the spider web, the reflections in the pond, and the rabbit convey?

As these questions suggest, the film version of *The Outsiders* not only retains the thematic concerns of the novel, but also expresses these concerns in both cinematic and literary terms. Students who watch the film and analyze it thus have the opportunity to study Hinton's plot, characters, and theme while also considering how film can express meaning in a creative way.

The Outsiders is rated PG, and, while certainly tame by current standards, might be objectionable to some parents because of language and violence, as well as its depiction of teenage drinking, fighting, criminal behavior, and family problems. One way to avoid controversy would be to "quote" individual scenes as Fehlman suggests. Scenes such as Ponyboy and Johnny's flight following the killing would be particularly appropriate for classroom use, and such scenes could even benefit from being shown in isolation, since isolation would facilitate a close analysis of elements such as imagery and symbolism within individual scenes. Teachers wishing to show the film in its entirety should deal with any objections or challenges the same way they would with problems arising from the use of a controversial book. One option would be to allow students whose parents objected to the film to spend those days in the library, perhaps reading another young adult book of their choice.

Conclusion

Young adult novels are effective in the classroom. First, they are effective because the students will be eager to read the assignment. Second, they are effective because they are well written, and through careful planning of prereading and discussion questions and through the integration of film and the printed word, students will not only find pleasure in reading but also develop higher level thinking skills in relation to literature. If we want our students to enjoy reading and to become lifetime readers and if we want them to make critical judgments about meaning and literary value, then we are not doing students a disservice by replacing some of the traditional literary selections with

contemporary young adult novels. If the activities we have suggested in this article are incorporated into the English classroom, students will be developing the higher level thinking skills which the NAEP found to be lacking. And if they enjoy reading the novels, they are developing an interest and perhaps a passion for literature that may last a lifetime.

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Romantic Love / Marriage Survey

1. Love means never having to say you're sorry.
2. Teenagers cannot experience "true" love.
3. No one is ever too young to fall in love.
4. It is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.
5. Love at first sight is possible.
6. Love is blind.
7. Love never changes.
8. Physical attraction must precede true love.
9. If you're really in love, physical appearance doesn't matter.
10. You can't expect a person to change his or her habits after marriage.
11. In love relationships, "opposites attract."
12. If someone does not return your affection, the best thing to do is to keep trying to change his or her mind.
13. You have to work at love.
14. For the most part, being in love is a "pain in the neck."

15. If you truly love someone, you will not be attracted to anyone else.

From *Writing About Literature* by Elizabeth Kahn, Carolyn Calhoun Walter, and Larry R. Johannessen, p. 36. ERIC / RCS and NCTE, 1984. Reprinted by permission.

What Is Friendship?

1. Sharon DeWealth thought that Dwayne DeTubb was the best-looking guy at Dunbar High. For months she had been hoping that Dwayne would ask her for a date. Finally in early spring, Dwayne asked Sharon to go out with him to a movie and dinner. Sharon was nervous all evening. She wanted to leave Dwayne with a good impression. During dinner Sharon and Dwayne talked about Gwendolyn, Sharon's best friend. Dwayne observed that Gwendolyn was a "real dog" and the most obnoxious person he had ever met. Sharon agreed with everything Dwayne said. Is Sharon a good friend to Gwendolyn? Explain your answer.

2. One Saturday afternoon Thurston Hunger called his friend Bert Counton to ask Bert if he would like to go to a movie that evening. Bert said he was sorry but he was sick with a terrible cold and had to stay home and rest. Later that afternoon Bert got a call from a popular girl named Susan Winns. Susan asked Bert if he would like to attend a concert with her that evening. Bert said he would be glad to go, and he immediately began making preparations. Would Thurston think that Bert's behavior was characteristic of a good friend? Explain.

3. Ryan Caraway and Roland Butter decided to cut classes and go to a baseball game on Monday. On Sunday they agreed to meet at the bus stop at 11:30 the next morning. On Monday Roland waited for Ryan for over an hour at the bus stop. He finally decided to go to the game alone. When Roland talked to Ryan later that day, Ryan explained that he had forgotten about their arrangements and had gone to school. If you were Roland, would you change your feelings toward Ryan?

4. Hilda and Juanita grew up together in Detroit. They were constant companions; they went to school together; they studied together; they went to concerts and plays together. It seemed that whenever you saw Hilda, you also saw Juanita. When the girls were 15 years old, Juanita and her family moved to San Antonio, Texas. After 10 years, the girls still exchange letters and cards on special occasions. Sometimes they will surprise each other with a phone call. They still visit each other whenever they get a chance. Do Hilda and Juanita act like friends? Why or why not?

5. Bud called Rick one Sunday afternoon. Bud explained that he was out on Saturday night with Mirna Quinsteedt. Bud was able to go out with Mirna because he told his steady girlfriend Amy that he was going to a basketball game with Rick. Bud pleaded with Rick to cover for him if he talked to Amy. Bud told Rick, "Come on, be a pal!"

If Bud is Rick's friend, what will he do when he sees Amy?

6. One rainy Saturday, Zeke was awakened by a phone call at 2:00 in the morning. Archie had phoned to ask for help. He had been drinking beer all night at Bennie's White Rose Tap. As he was driving home, Archie had run his pickup off the road. The pickup had gotten stuck in a ditch along Carter Road, five miles south of the town. Archie asked Zeke to drive to the spot and help him get his truck out of the ditch. Zeke assured Archie that he would be there in 20 minutes. Archie was relieved. He had used his last quarter to make the phone call, and he felt very fortunate that he had been able to reach a friend to help him. After Archie hung up, Zeke lay down in bed and fell fast asleep. Does Zeke have a responsibility to help Archie? Why or why not?

7. Antoinette Zither had been planning a trip to Europe for two years. She was prepared to spend four weeks traveling throughout four countries. Two days before the trip, Ellen Merchessen, Antoinette's college roommate, called to say that her parents had died in a fiery car crash. Ellen was very upset. She was having difficulty making funeral arrangements and needed help. Antoinette immediately canceled her trip and prepared to stay with Ellen. Would you describe Antoinette's and Ellen's behavior as friendly?

From *Explorations: Introductory Activities for Literature and Composition 7-12* by Peter Smagorinsky, Tom McCann, and Stephen Kern, p. 45. ERIC / RCS and NCTE, 1987. Reprinted by permission.

What Makes a Good Parent?

Rank the following situations from the one you think shows the BEST action of a parent (or parents) in raising a child to the WORST action of a parent(s) in raising a child. Below each situation, explain your reasons for ranking each action as you did.

BEST 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 WORST

A. Although Bill and his friends are only fifteen, they are able to get into "R" rated movies at a local theater without any questions asked. Bill's parents find out. They tell him he has been "breaking the law" and that he cannot accompany his friends to any more "R" rated movies.

B. Andy has a big history test for which he has not studied. So that he may study and take the exam later, his parents call the school and say he is sick.

C. Sue has just started attending a different high school. Her parents do not approve of several new friends she has brought home because they "act disrespectfully, use bad language, and ride motorcycles." Her parents say they are afraid of what will happen if Sue gets involved with the "wrong crowd" and tell her they do not want to see her with these "friends" again.

D. Four-year-old Jeffie always screams and cries when he has to go to nursery school. His mother tells him that if for a whole week he does not cry about going to nursery school, she will buy him a new toy.

E. Jenny works very hard to get B's in all her classes. Her parents tell her she should try harder and be more like her older brother who always makes A's.

F. Patty's parents will not allow her to smoke cigarettes. She argues that since she is sixteen she should be allowed to smoke. Each of her parents smokes two packs of cigarettes a day.

G. Joe breaks a neighbor's window while playing baseball. His father "grounds" him for three weeks. Since Joe does not have enough money to pay for the damage, his father makes him work in the yard and around the house to earn the money.

H. Steve is driven home by the police because he was caught shoplifting. The police tell his parents that they will not arrest him this time but that he should be aware of the seriousness of what he has done. His parents decide not to punish him because "boys will be boys."

I. Marianne would be happy wearing inexpensive jeans to school. Her mother, a single parent, does not make much money, but she insists on buying Marianne very expensive stylish clothes because she wants to be sure her daughter is in the "most popular group" at school.

From *Writing About Literature* by Elizabeth Kahn, Carolyn Calhoun Walter, and Larry R. Johannessen, p. 14. ERIC / RCS and NCTE, 1984. Reprinted by permission.

Annotated Bibliography: Young Adult Novels for the Secondary English Classroom

Charles Avinger and Mary Ann Tighe

Bridgers, Sue Ellen

Home Before Dark. Stella Willis is the oldest child in a family of itinerant farm workers. For 14 years she has traveled throughout the Southeast in a battered old car which is home for her father James Earl, her mother Mae, and her younger brothers and sister. But when they come back to the house, the farm, and the land where her father grew up, she is quick to put down roots and make friends, and she is determined never to leave her first real home.

Notes for Another Life. Wren Jackson and her older brother Kevin live with their grandparents while their father drifts in and out of mental hospitals with little hope of recovery. Their mother visits occasionally and assures them of her love, but it is obvious that most of her time and energy are invested in her career. When Wren considers the future, like her mother, she is torn between her desire for a traditional family role and her dream of being a concert pianist. Her grandmother's steadfast love helps her through these difficult times.

Cormier, Robert

The Chocolate War. Jerry Renault attends a private school for boys. On the inside of his locker, he hangs a poster which poses the question "Do I dare disturb the universe?" Jerry does disturb his universe—his school—when he refuses to take part in their annual chocolate candy sale. He takes a stand against the administration, the student body, and a secret school society, the Vigils. At the end of the novel, the reader must decide if Jerry paid too high a price for refusing to compromise.

I Am the Cheese. Adam Farmer is the hero, and Cormier weaves clues of his real identity into a spellbinding narrative. Adam is in a hospital. Is it a mental hospital? Is he being held prisoner? Why is he being questioned? Through Adam's recollections, the reader travels with him from Monument, Massachusetts, to Rutterburg, Vermont, where he hopes to visit his father. In a dramatic climax, readers learn the real reason behind his journey.

Taylor, Mildred

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry. Cassie Logan is growing up in Mississippi in the 1930s. Her family is one of the few black families who own their own land. Cassie has lived a somewhat sheltered life, but over the course of one year, she is introduced to racial prejudice and all its ugly implications. By the end of the novel, her family is still struggling to survive, but readers are confident that they will succeed.

Let the Circle Be Unbroken. In this sequel to *Roll of Thunder,* the story begins with Cassie Logan and her brothers watching a trial at the local courthouse. Their friend TJ is unfairly convicted of murder and sentenced to be hung. They know they are seeing him for the last time when he exits the courthouse. Cassie's family continues to encounter prejudice, which results in financial problems and the disappearance of her older brother. But in the end, the family bonds hold, and the Logan family remains strong and united.

My Professional Concern

Karon Bailey
Alabama State University, Montgomery, Alabama

When I ask my freshmen composition students to project themselves 10 years into the future and write a paragraph telling me what kind of car they will be driving, where and in what kind of house they will be living, what kind of family and professional life they will have, not one student in three years has seen himself or herself as a teacher. The students can very clearly see themselves riding in BMWs or Volvos, living in palatial apartments or lavish homes, and working in management positions at IBM or in professions as lawyers or doctors. But they can't envision themselves as teachers. When I was an undergraduate 20-something years ago, almost half the female students at my school were planning to be teachers. Where are the teachers for the next generation? From our political leaders, we hear the cry "Education, Education!" but there is no real money and little genuine respect for teachers. Young people today know what is valuable in America—business. We can cry "Education, Education," but they see where the money is. They aren't charmed by rhetoric. Until we start paying teachers what we say they're worth, we can envision college registration lines for business majors becoming increasingly longer and the lines for education majors dwindling to a miserable trickle.

A Teacher's Introduction To Deconstruction

By Sharon Crowley. NCTE Teacher's Introduction Series.
Urbana: NCTE, 1989. xvii and 63 pp.

Reviewed by
Patricia Gaston
Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama

A Teacher's Introduction To Deconstruction is the vanguard in "a new series of books that are [to be] especially useful to teachers of English and language arts at all levels." It seems to me a bold maneuver of the NCTE editors to begin the series with a subject as complex and controversial as deconstruction, and a mistake. Including its foreward, appendix, glossary, notes, and bibliography, Crowley's *Introduction* is less than 70 pages long, making this a monograph rather than a book. While her bibliography is inclusive, it suffers from a false democracy in that it lumps introductory sources and esoteric works together. The notes and glossary are more helpful, while the appendix "How To Read Derrida" is too brief to be useful. These flaws would be less obvious were it not for the series' stated intentions.

"Reading / Writing Derrida" offers a brief historical overview of Jacques Derrida's "written works . . . published between 1967 and 1972," focusing mainly on *Of Grammatology*. "Deconstruction and the English Profession" deals with "the Yale School," deconstruction's initial impact on American academics. The second half of this chapter is Crowley's best work toward understanding what deconstruction could create in writing programs. She points out that writing is interpretative and necessarily subjective—ideas which have important ramifications for writing pedagogy. In discussing how all writing is actually collaborative in that it is an exchange between writer and audience, writer and self as reader, this piece of writing and the tradition it finds itself in, Crowley describes something energizing which could be put to use in writing instruction. But how? Crowley offers no actual, employable suggestions for the deployment of these deconstructive insights at any level of English instruction. "Deconstructing Writing Pedagogy" continues this omission. It suggests that we become critically self-conscious about the methods and goals of our writing programs because these (like language itself) are opaque and politically charged. But again, Crowley offers no applicable suggestions as to how deconstructive teaching could be carried out. Instead, she describes classroom situations which raise the spectres of standardless writing and anarchy often used to bludgeon deconstruction into silence.

An essential question is whether deconstruction itself is particularly useful to teachers outside of university graduate programs. Like Crowley, I would say that deconstruction is potentially useful in its reevaluation of the relationships among what is written, who writes it, and who reads it. But Crowley's text neglects Derrida's valuation of precision in writing. Precision does not mean authoritarianism or the end of interpretation or the end of the dynamic or reading: all ills for which Crowley offers deconstruction as a cure. It does mean writing and thinking skillfully, demonstrating the strengths and varieties of language in written expression. Derrida and members of the Yale School demonstrate this sort of precision in their own work. Deconstructive reading / writing is a dynamic, but not a sloppy one.

The processes of writing and reading as rewriting are essential to deconstruction and to what we do at all levels of language instruction. Deconstruction energizes these processes by giving us permission to go further into a radical reevaluation of audience analysis—and indeed by implying a method to be deduced from reading deconstructions themselves. But it does not (as *Time* magazine once would have it) give students blanket permission "not to do their homework" or (as Crowley now has it) "to do their own thing." Nor does it demote the trained reader / writer, as Crowley hopes it will. Precision means skill, technique; deconstruction values both, even as it exposes their place in written discourse. Serial reading and writing—the essence of what Crowley defines as deconstruction—is an ongoing process which can never be completed, if completion means that reading will finally lead us to the one and only, definitive meaning of a literary text or that writing can ever be absolutely unambiguous. But serial rewriting is neither pointless nor incompetent. Language is indeed opaque, as deconstructionists and others demonstrate, but this characteristic does not equate with license. And here's the hook: Crowley's text resurrects the traditional academy's objections to deconstruction without acknowledging this maneuver or attempting to exorcise its errors. Perhaps Crowley's 10-year acquaintance with deconstruction stands between her introduction and the distinct difficulties most of us have as we begin to decode deconstruction.

From my own experience, I know that deconstruction is enlivening in college classes. I suggest Gregory Ulmer's *Applied Grammatology* for college application and Atkins and Johnson's *Writing and Reading Differently: Deconstruction and the Teaching of Composition* (especially Barbara Johnson's "Teaching Deconstructively") as a general introduction.

The Sense of Learning

By Ann E. Berthoff. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton, 1990.

Reviewed by
Barbara Hoetker Ash
Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama

Ann Berthoff's latest work is a collection of essays and addresses, a sequel, she says, to *The Making of Meaning: Metaphors, Models, and Maxims for Writing Teachers* (Boynton 1981). Her collection is organized into three sections, each centered around a question. Part I is entitled "Is Teaching Still Possible?"; Part II, "Is Learning Still Possible?"; and Part III, "Is Reading Still Possible?" These questions serve Berthoff as "points of departure for an exploration of what it means to teach, to learn, to read." The grounds for her exploration include her own experiences teaching in college, some of which are amusingly recounted in this collection, and her extensive background in philosophy, which readers must share to understand Berthoff's ideas.

To make teaching, learning, and reading possible in our classrooms today, Berthoff says we must see each as "a hermeneutic enterprise." That is, each process must become an occasion for interpretation, for the making of meaning. Berthoff views teaching, for instance, not as the kind of direct language instruction in which students are given "slots to be filled," but as inquiry or exploration. Teaching should provide a time and an occasion for our "species-specific or God-given capacity to make meaning" to be realized in each student who comes our way.

To help us understand the process of making meaning, Berthoff turns to C.S. Peirce, whom she names "the father of semiotics" and his concept of *triadicity*. As Berthoff interprets Peirce, the the concept of triadicity holds that meaning requires not only a symbol (a word) and a referent (an object), but also an interpretant, "an idea which mediates between the symbol and what it represents" and which requires a human interpreter before it can exist. Our duty as teachers, according to Berthoff, is to support students in their role as interpreters, as makers or composers of ideas whereby meaning may be realized.

Berthoff insists that to aid students in learning, to help them use language to make and convey meaning, we must first cultivate a certain habit of mind in ourselves as learners and model it, in turn, for our students. This habit of mind is reflection, particularly reflection on our own interpretations of all we encounter, including written texts. Berthoff believes it is essential that we develop in ourselves and our students what Peirce called "the sense of learning." Berthoff sees, embedded in Peirce's phrase, a two-fold challenge which she issues to us as teachers. First, in conjunction with our students, we should draw out and examine the implications of our initial interpretations of things, people, and events, and then we should engage in reformulating and further testing our new interpretations.

What is the best way to carry out this task of examining and reformulating interpretations? Reflection can come through classroom dialogue and through transactions with written texts—with ourselves and among themselves. Without nurturing a dialectic between students and written texts, Berthoff says "no meaning will be made, no knowledge can be won." This essential talking and writing that we and our students must do, should evolve from "looking and looking again" at familiar and foreign objects (like seed pods, soft drink cans, and stove bolts), at written texts (including our own) and at human behaviors (our own as well as others').

Berthoff's convictions and her teaching practices are very close to my own, which is why I am particularly drawn to her work. However, Berthoff's prose is not for me an easy or particularly inviting read. To illustrate one difficulty, I will quote from one of her favorite philosophers, Susanne Langer, and then from *The Sense of Learning*. Langer writes, "Meaning has both a logical and a psychological aspect" (*Philosophy in a New Key*, 3d ed. Cambridge: Harvard U Press, 1976, p. 53.). Berthoff writes, "Language seen as a means of making meaning has two aspects, the hypostatic and the discursive." Berthoff's terms "hypostatic" and "discursive" initially put me off because they are unfamiliar; Langer's terms are easier to understand.

I recommend *The Sense of Learning* because Berthoff has led me to new practices and has extended my thinking about teaching and learning. Berthoff's discussion also confirms my beliefs about the interconnectedness of reading, writing, listening, and talking and their value in the classroom, kindergarten through university. But I caution readers about possible difficulties in making meaning from Berthoff's work, particularly if they do not bring to her text a current working knowledge of philosophy.

Teaching Literature in the Secondary School

By Richard Beach and James Marshall.
San Diego: Harcourt, 1991. 571 pp. $33.50

Reviewed by
W. David LeNoir
Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama

The beauty of the best pedagogical textbooks is that they push theory into practice. The beauty of this one is that its authors push cutting-edge theory into practice, and they do so in realistic ways; this is not a book of ethereal idealisms.

Central to *Teaching Literature in the Secondary School* is a reader response approach to teaching literature that values student responses and uses them as a means of engaging students in the study of literature by making the study personally relevant. Reader response theory maintains that meaning is not inherent in the text, awaiting a sufficiently skilled decoder; meaning is constructed actively through transactions between the reader and the text. A strategy typical of a response-centered approach is to allow students to respond initially to those aspects of the text which the students find most compelling. This personal engagement forms a foundation upon which class discussions and other activities are then constructed. The clear connection between the students' responses and the activities which follow demonstrate to the students the importance and validity of their reactions. A reader response approach, however, does not ignore traditional considerations, such as attention to plot or textual detail; it simply recognizes them as aspects of the texts with which students transact in the process of making meaning.

In the first part of their book, Beach and Marshall describe, historically and functionally, the changing perspective about how meaning is formed. Advocating a response-centered approach, they present examples of actual teaching situations, classroom dialogue, and student writing. The authors discuss these situations in terms of their shortcomings and strengths and, in each instance, suggest ways to make them even more vital for the benefit of the individual students and the class as a whole. The authors also outline planning strategies for meeting a variety of needs and situations. One particularly valuable chapter addresses the rather formidable considerations of evaluating students' oral and written responses to literary texts.

Beach and Marshall devote the second part of the book to a more traditional convention—teaching literature by genre. Their approach to genre instruction, however, continues to embody their philosophy of emphasizing the students' roles in transacting with the text, and each chapter considers four perspectives, or types of knowledge, which readers bring to bear in the making of meaning—textual, social, cultural, and topical. Along with attention to short stories, novels, and poetry, Beach and Marshall have included separate chapters on mythology, fantasy, and science fiction; young adult novels; essays; and literature of different cultures. The authors also try to emphasize less traditional media—one chapter deals specifically with film and another with drama.

Each chapter includes lists of references, suggested reading for teachers, and literary texts recommended for study. The listings for the chapter about teaching the literature of different cultures are particularly helpful in that they contain a large number of works which represent each of several different cultures.

Interspersed throughout the text are two types of reader activities. The first is a series of quotations appearing at various points. These are intended as "springboards for discussion," but even isolated readers should enjoy their thought-provoking nature. The other reader activities provide specific strategies for applying theory in classroom situations. Some of the activities involve a short story included as an appendix, but most can be used with a variety of classes and texts, often with only minor alterations. Although the textbook is designed for teacher education classes, the activities are based in pedagogical theory and are appropriate for use in any secondary classroom. The book is less of a "cookbook" than it is an explanation of how theory can be incorporated into real situations.

While this book is not the first to advocate more emphasis on students' responses to their reading, it is the first to integrate that emphasis as widely into practical considerations. It would be unfortunate if the only educators to experience this book were those teaching or learning at the post-secondary level, for this book has the potential for revitalizing English programs at the secondary level without the enormous price tag usually associated with such renovations.

ACTE Alabama Council of
Teachers of English

Fall Workshop

Celebrating Each Other

Keynote Speaker
Jesse Perry
V. P. NCTE

Auburn University
at Montgomery
November 1 & 2, 1991

Presentations Include: Whole Language, Ethnic Literature, Southern Writers, Teaching Writing (K - College), Young Adult Novels

ACTE to You

Peggy Swoger, President

Here is the news from across the state.

1991 ACTE Fall Conference

Get ready AUM, here we come! The annual fall conference will be held at Auburn University at Montgomery on November 1 and 2. Jesse Perry, Vice-President of NCTE will be the featured speaker on Saturday. Perry, as many of you know, is language arts supervisor for the San Diego schools and a former teacher. We have invited Perry to speak on our conference theme "Diversity: Celebrate Each Other."

One of the problems that teachers are having with the implementation of whole language reading programs is that old, old, "snake in the grass" censorship. Our Friday evening program on November 1 will focus on this problem with a distinguished panel to lead our discussion. We hope you will want to be there to help us construct a statewide action plan to educate teachers on how to handle the problem once it arises and how to prevent or lessen the impact of a confrontation in your school or district.

We're looking for at least 100 new members at the fall conference, and we believe our current members are the detectives we need to bring in these new teachers! Our 1991 membership goal is to double the December 1990 membership of 250. We now are approaching 400 dues-paid members. Invite colleagues and volunteer to pick them up. They'll come when you share the program materials and show them what they've been missing.

NCTE Southeast Regional Conference

Many of us will be traveling to Asheville, North Carolina for the Southeast Regional NCTE Conference on October 17-19. Alabama will have a booth to feature Alabama writers, their books, and other literary materials from our state. Other states will feature their literary giants as well. The historic Grove Park Inn, the fall colors, and an outstanding program are sure to attract a large attendance. Contact Collett Dilworth in Greenville, NC, 919/757/6041, for more information.

NCTE Promising Young Writers

Congratulations to Alabama's three outstanding young writers who are winners in the 1991 NCTE Promising Young Writers competition. They are Naomi Jacobs and Damien Pfister, eighth grade students of Carole Coulter from Mountain Brook Junior High; and Amy Hancock, an eighth grade student of Susan Caraway of Hewitt Trussville Middle School. We hope these young writers, their parents, and their teachers will join ACTE for lunch in Montgomery on November 2. Many thanks to ACTE's Sandra Cooper for being Alabama's coordinator for the Promising Young Writer's Program.

Alabama Penman Winners

Another group of outstanding young writers from middle schools and high schools across the state are the 1991 winners of the Alabama Penman competition. The Alabama State Department of Education recently honored these winners, their parents, and teachers at a luncheon in Montgomery.

- **Junior Poetry:** Ashley Foster of Hewitt Trussville Middle School; Daniel Finney of Oneonta City Schools; and Lisa Beukenkamp of St. Paul's Episcopal.
- **Senior Poetry:** Leonard Thompson of Andalusia High School; Nathan McTague of Lanier High School; and Laura Warren of Mountain Brook High School.
- **Junior Short Story:** Amanda Louise Beasley of W.S. Neel High School; John R. Bowles of Briarwood Christian; and Ashley Linton of John C. Coleman Middle School of Cullman.
- **Senior Short Story:** Jason Davis of Coffee High School; Kendra Guilford of Eufaula High School; and Billy Huff of Holtville High.
- **Junior Essay:** Ellen Sawyer of Monroe County High School; Laurel Moore of Oak Park Middle School; and Brandi Bonner of Shades Valley Resource Learning Center.
- **Senior Essay:** Stephanie Black of Tuscaloosa County High School; Raymond Bentley Hicks of Hayden High School; and Laura E. Ware of Huntsville High School.

Congratulations to these excellent writers! First-place winners will be invited to read at the fall conference luncheon where the students and their parents will be our guests.

Changes in ACTE Boards

We welcome new members of the ACTE Board of Directors: Lanny E. Lancaster of Gadsden will chair our SLATE (Support for the Learning and Teaching of English) Committee; Bert Hitchcock of Auburn University will join the board as representative from the college level; Gwen McCorquodale of Vestavia East Elementary School and Evelyn Shaw of Tarrant Middle School will be new elementary level representatives; Diane Lamon of Indian Springs School will be the new treasurer, replacing Linda Moore. Many, many thanks to Linda, who has moved to Florida, for serving on the board as treasurer so many years. Three positions on the Publications Committee have been filled by Mary Beth Culp of the University of South Alabama, Laurie Shorter of St. Paul's Episcopal in Mobile, and Mary Ann Rygiel of Auburn High School.

Dennis Covington's New Book

Congratulations to ACTE member Dennis Covington on the recent publication of his young adult novel *Lizards*, published by Delacorte Press of New York (ISBN: 0-385-30307-6 / hardback $15.00).

ACTE members who have special news to share that would be of interest to other members, please write to me, Peggy Swoger, 2071 Montreat Circle, Birmingham, Alabama 35216.

Constitution

Article I. Name

The name of this organization shall be the Alabama Council of Teachers of English.

Article II. Affiliation

The Council shall be affiliated with the National Council of Teachers of English and shall maintain a non-profit status. Related professional groups throughout Alabama shall be encouraged to affiliate with the Council.

Article III. Purpose

The purpose of this organization shall be to improve the quality of instruction in English language arts at all educational levels in Alabama; to facilitate professional cooperation of members; to provide programs which will be conducive to more effective instruction in English in the state; and to encourage professional growth through research and publication without regard to distinctions of race, creed, or national origin.

Article IV. Membership

Teachers, supervisors, and administrators, in Alabama, and all other persons interested in the objectives of the Council are eligible for membership. Membership shall be in the following categories:

1. Active: consisting of members who by payment of dues enjoy all privileges of the Council.
2. Retired: consisting of members who are retired teachers of English.
3. Student: consisting of members who are undergraduate or graduate students and who do not hold full time positions as teachers of English.

Article V. Officers

Section 1:

The officers of this organization shall be a president, a vice-president / president-elect, a secretary, a treasurer, a parliamentarian, a past-president, a liaison officer, an archivist, three directors from the Council to the NCTE, and an additional vice-president to represent each affiliate that may have been organized under the ACTE umbrella. These officers, with the exception of the immediate past president, shall be elected at the annual business meeting and shall assume their duties immediately. All officers shall pay dues to the National Council of Teachers of English and the Alabama Council of Teachers of English in order to hold office in the Alabama Council.

Section 2:

The Executive Board shall, through its approval of various leadership positions and committee appointments, provide for equitable representation from racial groups as well as the various teaching levels.

Article VI. Executive Board

Section 1:

The Executive Board shall be composed of the officers of the Council in Article V, three representatives from the elementary, middle school, high school, and college levels of teaching, the editors of the Council's publications, a liaison from the State Department of Education, and a SLATE representative, at least one of whom shall be from independent schools in Alabama.

Section 2:

The powers of the Executive Board shall be (1) to approve presidential appointments; (2) to approve and spearhead projects to be undertaken by the Council; (3) to approve distribution of monies; (4) to organize affiliates under an ACTE umbrella throughout the state where members desire it; and (5) to supplant with others any members who consistently neglect attending board meetings or attending to Council business.

Section 3:

Non-officer members of the Executive Board shall be elected to a two-year term. For rotation purposes, the one member from each teaching level with the longest tenure shall rotate off the board at each biennial election.

Article VII. Elections

Section 1:

A nominating committee appointed by the president shall present a slate of officers as specified in Article V, biennially, at the annual business meeting. The slate shall have been approved by the Executive Board and published for the membership prior to the annual meeting. Candidates shall have consented to their nomination.

Section 2:

The officers and Executive Board members shall be elected biennially by a majority of the membership attending the annual open meeting.

Article VIII. Meetings

The Council shall have an annual, open business meeting held in conjunction with and at the time of the annual meeting of the Alabama Education Association. The announcement of this meeting shall be published for the membership. The Executive Board shall meet once each year in addition to meeting at the annual open meeting. Additional meetings may be called by the president or by one-third of the membership of the Board by notifying committee members in writing at least two weeks prior to the date of the special meeting.

Article IX. Quorum

Members of the Council present at the annual business meeting shall constitute a quorum.

Article X. Dues

Changes in the annual dues of the Council shall be recommended by the Executive Board for the approval of the membership at the annual business meeting.

Article XI. Parliamentary Authority

Parliamentary procedure at each meeting of the Council and its committees shall be governed by the latest edition of Robert's *Rules of Order*.

Article XII. Amendments

The constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the Council membership present at the annual business meeting, after at least two weeks prior notice of the amendment in a council publication.

Article XIII. Enabling Act

This constitution shall become effective when it has been passed by a two-thirds vote of the council present at the annual business meeting as in Article VIII.

Article XIV. Dissolution

In case of a dissolution of this council, any assets remaining after payment of debts, or provision therefore, shall revert to the National Council of Teachers of English.

By-Laws

Article I. Standing Committees:

Section 1. The standing committees of the Council shall be the Executive Board, the nominating committee, the annual fall conference committee, the membership committee, the publications committee, the SLATE (Support for the Learning and Teaching of English) committee, and such additional committees as shall be deemed necessary by the Executive Board.

Section 2. The president of the Council shall, with the assistance of the Executive Board, appoint the chairs of the various committees. Chairs of these committees will select members of their committees except where noted.

Section 3. The annual fall conference committee shall consist of the vice-president / president-elect as chair and such additional members as are deemed necessary.

Section 4. The nominating committee shall be formed as specified in the constitution, Article VII, Section 1.

Section 5. The publications committee shall consist of the appointed chair, and two representatives from the elementary, middle, secondary, and college teaching levels; serving as ex-officio members will be the president, treasurer, Newsletter editor, and members of the *Alabama English* editorial staff, which currently are the editor, business manager, three review editors, and two poetry editors. The chair will serve a four-year term, except that the term of the first chair will be three years. The chair may serve no more than two consecutive terms. Other members will serve four-year terms except that one from each level will serve an initial term of two years so that no more than one of the members from each level rotate off at the same time. Members may serve no more that two consecutive terms. The editorial staff shall be non-voting members; however, staff members may also serve as members in the categories stated above. The editorial staff will be selected by the editor and approved by the Publications Committee.

Section 6. The Executive Board shall be comprised of the members as specified in the constitution, Article VI, Section 1. The basic number of twelve members, three from each of the teaching levels of elementary, middle, high school, and college (at least one of whom will be from independent schools), will insofar as is possible, represent the different sections of the state. When any one of these twelve members is elected to the position of an officer in ACTE, the unexpired term as a Board member shall be filled by presidential appointment of a new member from the same teaching level. Rotation of non-officer members shall follow the procedure specified in the constitution, Article VI, Section 3.

Section 7. The SLATE Committee shall consist of a chair appointed by the president and approved by the Executive Board and such additional members as are deemed necessary. The purpose of this committee shall be to promote public and private support for the learning and teaching of English in the state of Alabama. Council funds may not be expended by this committee for political activities, but may be used for routine expenses as specified in the By-Laws, Article IV.

Section 8. The duties of standing committees and officers shall be printed in an affiliate handbook and distributed to committee chairs and members.

Article II: Dues

Membership dues are set by member vote at the annual meeting upon recommendation from the Executive Board. Currently, dues shall be ten dollars annually for active and retired membership; twenty dollars annually for institutional membership; and five dollars annually for student membership. One-half of the annual dues shall be earmarked for the Council's journal. All officers shall pay dues to the National Council of Teachers of English in order to hold office in the Alabama Council of Teachers of English.

Article III: Terms and Functions of Officers

Section 1: The president shall be elected to a two-year term and take office following election at the annual business meeting. The president shall preside at all meetings of the Council and of the Executive Board; make appointments as specified in the Constitution being mindful of insuring balanced representation of the membership; make any committee appointments as deemed necessary; represent ACTE at NCTE functions whenever possible; attend all meetings related to ACTE activities when requested or send substitute; serve as a general coordinator for council activities; lead in determining policies. Upon completion of the two-year term, the president shall serve two additional years as past-president.

Section 2: The vice-president / president-elect shall be elected for a term of two years to assume the presidency as the outgoing president fulfills the term of office. The vice-president shall serve in the absence of the president or at the president's request. The vice-president shall serve as chair of the annual fall conference standing committee.

Section 3: The secretary shall be elected for a term of two years. Duties shall be to make and keep records of all meetings of the Council and the general membership meetings, and preserve copies of all reports submitted by committees. Additionally, the secretary will take charge of all Council correspondence; prepare such notices, lists, and forms at the direction of the president; transport to the Executive Board, for safekeeping, all council records at the end of the term of office.

Section 4: The treasurer shall be elected for a term of two years. Duties shall be to receive and distribute all monies of the organization; keep an accurate account of all money belonging to the Council, depositing it in the name of the Council as directed by the Executive Board. At the annual spring meeting the treasurer shall submit a report showing all receipts and disbursements. In addition the treasurer shall perform such other duties as may be designated by the Council.

Section 5: The duties of the Liaison Officer shall be to serve as an ex-officio member of the Board of Directors of the NCTE; to serve as the link between the ACTE and AEA, the NCTE, and ACETA, and to serve the Council in an advisory capacity.

Section 6: The three members of this Council elected as directors to the NCTE shall represent this organization's position on matters of national scope as they affect the teaching of English. These directors cannot, however, make any binding financial agreements without approval of this Council's Executive Board.

Article IV: Expenses

Any stipend for directors or the president to attend the NCTE annual conference shall be approved by the Executive Board. All members of the Executive Board shall be reimbursed by the treasurer for approved expenses necessary for the successful carrying out of the work of the Board. Such expenses might include limited travel, telephone calls, stamps, stationery, etc.

To Join the ACTE

To join the Alabama Council of Teachers of English and receive a subscription to *Alabama English* with your membership, send $10 and your name, school affiliation, and mailing address to:

Martha Wall
221 Kent Drive
Homewood, Alabama 35209

Today's date: ____________________

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home address: ____

city/state/zip: ____

home phone: ____

teaching / administrative position: ___________________________

grade (circle one):
elementary
jr. high school
high school
college

school: ____

Call For Manuscripts

Alabama English is seeking manuscripts for publication in its subsequent issues. We are particularly looking for discussions of classroom method and educational philosophy in the teaching of reading, writing, and literature at all grade levels from kindergarten through college. These articles can range in length from 1250 to 4000 words. We also are interested in publishing teaching tips about classroom assign-ments, short poems that are directly related to teaching and other professional experiences, and essays discussing professional concerns at either a national or a state level. Teaching tips should be 1000 words or less, and essays about professional concerns should be 250 words or less.

All submissions should be typed double space. Please send three copies. If you want your manuscript returned, please enclose a self-addressed mailing envelope with postage attached by a paper clip.

All manuscripts should follow the guidelines in the most recent edition of the *MLA Handbook*.

Submit manuscripts to the following address:

Isabelle Thompson, Editor
Alabama English
Department of English
Auburn University, Alabama 36849

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ALABAMA ENGLISH

Spring & Fall 1992 • Volume 4 • Numbers 1 & 2

Acte
Double Issue

A Publication of the
Alabama Council of Teachers of English
in cooperation with Auburn University.

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ALABAMA ENGLISH

A Publication of the Alabama Council of Teachers of English
in cooperation with Auburn University Extension and Auburn University
Colleges of Education and Liberal Arts and the Department of English

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Subscriptions: Subscription to *Alabama English* is included in the annual ACTE membership dues renewed each fall. To join the ACTE and receive a subscription to *Alabama English*, send your name, address, and school affiliation along with a check for $10.00 to Martha Wall, 221 Kent Drive, Homewood, Alabama 35209. *Alabama English* will be published twice a year, spring and fall.

Submissions: Alabama English welcomes manuscripts from 1250 to 4000 words long about current theory and practice in the teaching of reading, writing, and literature at any grade level; manuscripts approximately 1000 words long as "teaching tips"; short poems that are directly related to teaching and other professional experiences; and short essays approximately 250 words long about professional concerns. All manuscripts should be typed double space, and three copies should be submitted. For return of manuscript, enclose a self-addressed envelope with stamps attached by a paper clip. Send submissions to David W. Chapman, Editor, *Alabama English*, S. U. Box 2207, Samford University, Birmingham, Alabama 35229. Suggestions for book reviews should be sent to the review editors.

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Volume 4 **Numbers 1 and 2** **Spring and Fall 1992**

ALABAMA ENGLISH

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Editor's Introduction

Isabelle Thompson

When I became editor of *Alabama English* four years ago, I was like an 18-year-old entering college. I thought I knew some things about teaching and about writing and editing, but what I learned during the editorship exceeded by multiples what knowledge I started with. Editing *Alabama English* has significantly changed my life—the way I teach and the way I view my profession, even the way I write. I am proud to be an English teacher and to live in Alabama, the home of the best colleagues I could hope for. In this last issue of *Alabama English* I will edit, I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to learn from you and for helping me grow as a professional.

This issue of *Alabama English* is a double one, combining the Spring and Fall publications to save money on printing and mailing. Although diverse in topic and type, the contents show how much we share, regardless of grade level or teaching assignment.

The first three articles tell "stories" from reading and writing workshops. In "Portrait from a Partnership," Barbara Hoetker Ash, Janeanne Barrett, and Pamela Eason tell the story of the fifth-grader Charlann as she becomes immersed in a community of readers and writers. From the middle of the state at Pinson Elementary School, John Bandy tells "Once More, With Feeling" of his own breakthrough into making assignments that are personally meaningful for him and for his fifth graders. Like Bandy, aware of his own growth as well as the growth of his students, Richard L. Graves writes about his concern to "Do the Right Thing" with a college student who uses writing as a means for coping with her personal pain. These "stories" portray the difficulties and the pleasures of daily life in the classroom.

The four articles that follow discuss methods of teaching and curriculum development. Karon S. Bailey explains Directed Reading Activity, a structured method for teaching reading. Sarah Liggett speculates about "Thinking a Way Out" from prewriting to composing a first draft. Thomas P. Adler offers tips for teaching *The Glass Menagerie* as it was staged. Finally, Sue Powell and Gloria Solomon discuss the benefits of interdisciplinary teaching in making the elementary school curriculum "whole."

Along with the full-length articles, this issue of *Alabama English* is particularly rich in teaching tips, provides another discussion of cultural literacy, and includes a number of book reviews. A range of important pedagogical concerns are discussed, including methods for stressing audience and purpose in teaching writing and for encouraging students to eat their way into literature. Some of the approaches are traditional—vocabulary as an indicator of cultural literacy; some are not—popular movie videos as motivators for reading the classics. Some of the books reviewed are written or edited by nationally known experts; some are by Alabamian experts, including Dennis Covington and Bert Hitchcock.

I hope that you will learn as much from reading this issue as I did from editing it.

Announcing the New Editor

David W. Chapman
Samford University

The Alabama Council of Teachers of English would like to recognize the following groups who will be supporting future issues of Alabama English.

Samford University
Howard College of Arts and Sciences
Orlean Bullard Beeson School of Education
Samford University Writing Programs
Department of English

From the New Editor of *Alabama English*

My Life in 1000 Words or Less

David W. Chapman

Probably all teachers look backward at the road that led them to where they are. I imagine most have suspicions that they may have taken a wrong turn somewhere along the way. Still, I can't imagine any profession that would have brought me greater joys or made each day more of an adventure.

My first teaching experience was in an inner-city school with the general atmosphere of a minimum security prison. I was fresh out of college and full of enthusiasm and optimism. I think some of my zeal was the result of seeing *Conrack*. (It certainly wasn't inspired by my education courses.) For those of you who may have missed this movie, *Conrack* was based loosely on the first teaching experience of Pat (*Prince of Tides*) Conroy. Conroy goes to a small, rural, black school and becomes teacher-friend-social worker-personal hygienist for the children.

I quickly discovered that I was not Conroy. If someone were casting my movie, they would have to imagine John Houseman of *Paper Chase* playing the lead in *Blackboard Jungle*. I had wonderful lesson plans, carefully written behavioral objectives, and copious lecture notes. Unfortunately, I was in the wrong school, or maybe I was in the wrong century. I quickly discovered that the students weren't interested in my intellectual "gems." Most were rowdy and impatient with my high-flown vocabulary. A few sat quietly and passively, but I suspected they were in a state of chemically-induced euphoria. I soon realized that I knew a lot about my subject and very little about teaching. But I also learned to adapt, to be flexible, to listen as well as to talk, and I found that teaching was possible anywhere if the teacher cared enough to find out what the students really needed.

My next job was in a small school where I taught ninth-grade, tenth-grade, eleventh-grade, and twelfth-grade English. I also taught speech and journalism. Six different preparations each day. I also sponsored the school newspaper and the yearbook. I also sponsored the junior class and ran the concessions at all the sporting events. And, no kidding, I drove the school bus. I did have one thing in common with Conroy. Teaching had become not just a job—it was my life. Virtually every waking minute of my day was occupied with my work. Despite the frenetic pace, I don't look back at this time with regret. The privilege of working with some wonderful young people and being a positive influence on their lives was its own reward.

After five years of teaching high school, I decided to go on to graduate school. The pace did not slow down appreciably. I was now married, and we had decided to start our family. In order to make a living, I was teaching five courses at a small college in one city, going to graduate school full time in another, and living in a third. The daily commute was around 100 miles. As I was writing my dissertation, my wife was confined to bed with our second child, and I was taking care of our toddler and doing many of the household chores. I was also the Managing Editor of *Freshman English News*.

After receiving my doctorate, I took a job at a comprehensive university in Texas with 26,000 students, helped run the freshman writing program, and directed the writing center. I also was Managing Editor for the *Writing Center Journal*. And I managed to publish enough not to perish.

During my time in Texas, I also administered a major federal grant for a writing across the curriculum project. We produced books and videotapes on WAC and led numerous workshops at two-year and four-year colleges throughout the state. I had hoped to begin an exemplary WAC program at my own institution, but the administration was unwilling to invest resources in the project and the faculty was preoccupied with their research interests.

Two years ago I became the Director of Writing Across the Curriculum at Samford University. The administration has fully supported the program here. We have brought outstanding speakers like Elaine Maimon and Lisa Gerrard to campus. Faculty are given stipends to participate in semester-long seminars for developing writing-intensive courses. All students are required to demonstrate writing proficiency for graduation and must take at least two writing-intensive courses in addition to their required freshman writing courses. We also distribute a WAC newsletter, featuring innovative ideas developed by faculty for using writing in content courses. I continue to teach a variety of writing courses in addition to my administrative duties.

As this short personal history indicates, my teaching experience cuts across many boundaries. I have been in public and private schools, secondary and college, large and small. I can't say I've done everything, but I've probably seen more than most. And if I've learned anything, it's that teaching is never perfect. I don't know of any teacher, certainly not any teacher that I admire, who feels that they have it all down to an exact science. Most of us feel like every year is a new experience and every class a new challenge.

One of the reasons I attempted this personal background is that I hope it will make me a more "approachable" editor. Too frequently, the editor of a journal is seen in the same light as the county judge—distant, authoritarian, and generally unsympathetic to the human condition. The judge is someone you don't encounter too often, and when you do, the meetings are usually under less than favorable conditions.

My own model for the editor is something more of a counselor—a good listener, an encourager, a facilitator. I want to hear your ideas, your concerns, your dreams. I want *Alabama English* to address the real needs of committed teachers. I hope that this journal will soon be telling your story as well as mine.

Portrait from a Partnership

Barbara Hoetker Ash, Janeanne Barrett, and Pamela Eason

Barbara Hoetker Ash is an assistant professor of English Education and Reading at Auburn University. Prior to coming to Auburn, she taught in a drop-out prevention program in southwest Georgia and at the Florida State University School, a k-12 laboratory school.

Janeanne Barrett is a fifth-grade teacher at Drake Middle School in Auburn. She has an MEd in Elementary Education and has taught fifth grade at Drake for seven years.

Pamela Eason, who interned with Janeanne, is currently a sixth-grade teacher at Wetumpka Elementary (near Montgomery). She, too, has an MEd in Elementary Education.

Opening Episode

She is ticked off. I can tell even before Charlann reaches me and certainly before she begins to speak.

"My authors' circle told me my lead was 'just facts.' Now you tell me what's 'just facts' about this!" Charlann has planted herself in front of me, one hand in a fist hitched onto the point of her hip, the other hand waving a manuscript of notebook paper.

I am visiting this day, as I have been for the past month and a half, in a fifth-grade language arts class run collaboratively as a writing workshop by the teacher (Janeanne), an intern (Pamela), and me, a professor from the university just a mile or so from Charlann's school. On this day Pamela's mini-lesson has focused on using dialogue without "he said" and "she said" markers. (This lesson builds on the previous week's demonstration of how an author can change—and improve—a lead, an opening to a story, by incorporating dialogue into the narration.) As a part of today's mini-lesson, two students, who had earlier rehearsed their parts, have performed "How to Hang Up the Telephone," a short piece consisting solely of dialogue.

Mini-lesson over, students have moved into what Nancie Atwell calls "the workshop proper," the time when students work on their own, pursuing their individual agendas as writers. Some of the fifth graders work at the editing table; others sit alone at their desks or confer together at peer-conferencing stations. Janeanne circulates among them, while Pamela holds evaluation conferences with students whose work is ready for publication. I have been involved with today's scheduled authors' circle, a meeting of five intern-selected students who talk about their works-in-progress and who read their writing aloud, giving and getting responses. Today's group does not include Charlann, who's a member of a different circle. The group has just disbanded, so I'm free to go elsewhere. But as I rise (authors' circles are held on the floor at the front of the room), I see

Charlann heading my way, her face and her movements registering strong emotion.

But having crossed the room to reach me and then giving vent to her indignation, Charlann changes her tone. Her demand that I tell her what's "just facts" about her lead becomes a quieter request. "Can I read you this and you tell me if it's 'just facts'?" I nod, and she begins.

"Hilton Head Island. When I was two I went to Hilton Head. First we planned where we were going. We wanted to go to Hilton Head Island. Next we made arrangements at the Hilton on Hilton Head Island in South Carolina. The big day. We left from Auburn early in the morning. We drove, drove, and drove for six hours. I was in the back and in my car seat. We stopped at my grandparents and had lunch there."

As I listen I conclude that Charlann's authors' circle is right on target; her lead *is* "just facts."

But I am spared from giving Charlann my evaluation, for she breaks off reading and immediately launches a protest against the revision her peers suggested. "They want me to try conversation, but I was only two years old. I don't remember what anyone said." Her voice is almost a wail.

There is no time to console Charlann or offer her advice because Pamela signals an end to the workshop. Lunch time is approaching. (Group share for this class comes after lunch.) Charlann rushes from me to put her writing away in her folder, which she tucks securely into her desk. As the students parade down the hall, I head off for my office to make notes on today's encounters.

I return the next day and the workshop begins anew, this time with Pamela's extended mini-lesson on dialogue. Working from a professional author's story, students pinpoint alternatives to the standard "he said" and "she said" markers. They also examine, in Pamela's words, "how authors add action, gestures, and facial movements to the dialogue." As soon as the mini-lesson ends, Charlann waves me over. She fairly dances in her seat. "Listen to this." She positions her paper, torn from a spiral notebook, then reads:

> "How much longer, Mommy?" Clifford said whiney.
>
> "Three more hours," my mom said sleepily.
>
> "Mary Ann, let's get gas here," my dad said to my mom.
>
> "OK," my mom said.
>
> We all stumbled out of the car except me, two-year old Charlann Potter, because I was in a carseat.

Charlann beams up at me, "I just love this new lead!"

Commentary

We chose Barbara's transactions with Charlann as a focus for this paper because, brief as the two encounters were, they seem charged with meaning. In Charlann we see a fifth grader who, in the context of the writing workshop, came to know herself as a writer proud of her craft.

There were instruction and nudges aplenty to aid Charlann along the way. We'll mention a few. On April 23, 12 class days after launching the writing workshop, Pamela gave an extended mini-lesson introducing the concept of leads and presenting an overview of the different kinds writers use. She concluded the lesson with a directive to the students: "I want to see you try a different lead to the piece you're working on." Two days earlier, while conferring privately with Charlann about her first completed work, Pamela had recorded one of the goals set for the writer's next piece: "Charlann will write a lead that is interesting to the reader and that gives the reader clues about Charlann's purpose for writing." In her next mini-lesson on leads, delivered 17 days after the first, Pamela focused on transforming a lead with dialogue; conversation, she noted, made her feel as if she were "there in the story." Two class days later, on May 20, the day Charlann approached Barbara with her troubles, there was another mini-lesson about dialogue in narrative writing.

Undeniably, Charlann and her peers were influenced by this instruction. It's clear that a standard held by adults (Pamela and Janeanne)—that writers provide leads which will captivate and engage readers—became the students' standard. After all, it was the authors' circle—not the intern, the teacher, or the visitor—that urged Charlann *to try dialogue* to enliven her "just facts" lead. Moreover, although instruction, in the form of mini-lessons, had introduced Charlann to models she might follow, it was she—not the intern, the teacher, the visitor, or the authors' circle—it was Charlann the writer who, after bewailing her predicament to Barbara, found her own way out. Charlann resolved the problem of "not remembering what anyone said" by *inventing* a dialogue to open her "story."

Included in that dialogue were adverbs indicating how two characters' voices would sound: "whiney" for Clifford and "sleepily" for Mary Ann. Perhaps it was these two words which sparked Charlann's intense delight with her own work. Five minutes prior to her reading the new lead to Barbara, as part of the day's mini-lesson, the students had picked out words (including adverbs) accompanying a professional author's dialogue markers. Charlann had used a professional's technique *before* it became the focus of a mini-lesson.

Along with teacher instruction and the kind of immediate response and individual attention provided by peer and teacher conferences, group share, and authors' circle, Charlann had been given time in class to write (topics self selected). She had also listened to others talk about their own writing and had heard them read their work aloud (fellow students, Janeanne, and Pamela had all done so). In group share she had responded to her fellow writers, at first, like many other students, in a highly critical and negative manner ("That sounds stupid! Why doesn't she just . . ."). But as she and her classmates were coached to give more constructive and supportive responses, Charlann changed her tune, offering instead of put-downs, suggestions ("She might try . . ."). In essence, in the spring of her fifth-grade year, Charlann had become immersed in a community of writers.

But Charlann was also a member of a reading community. There were student-published works to read, including some from sixth-grade authors Barbara had taught in a writing workshop at a school in another state. There were reference works for science and social studies projects and paperback books, narratives mostly. In addition, thanks to an Auburn University, College of Education grant, there were enough paperback copies of a work that those who selected it could form a literature circle, a group who, after quiet reading time ended, would meet and discuss their common reading. (Once the grant book order had arrived, one day of the week's writing workshop was devoted to reading workshop.)

In such a climate, it is hardly surprising that Charlann evolved from a student insecure about her work to a writer serious about her craft and an author accomplished in her art. She was not alone; there were many others who made the most of their workshop opportunities. In their experiments with the written word, supported by peers and adults alike, they learned not only how to convey their experiences but also how to shape them for the delight of self and others.

Of course, in the short amount of time our collaborative workshop ran (from April 8 to the first few days of June), not all fifth graders heeded the call to become authors. But the speed with which many "took to" their roles as writers, their eagerness to engage with others who were "authoring," and their earnestness in producing works that would move their readers—these are signs, as are the first reluctant and tentative, shaky and exploratory attempts at authorship by some of the other fifth graders—signs that students long for more chances to make and to create.

Closing Episode

As Charlann opened this piece, so she shall close it. On one of the last school days, when packing up and wrapping up were well in progress, Charlann posed a question to Pamela, "When do we get to take our writing folders home?"

In the rush of last-week school duties and under the pressure of a university quarter coming to a close, and in this, our first teacher-intern-professor partnership, we had not firmed up our data-saving plans. Glancing guiltily at Barbara, Pamela answered Charlann, "Well, we'll have to negotiate about that."

Charlann's cry rent the air. "But all my techniques are in here!"

"And that," laughed Janeanne later, "is ownership."

Charlann owns her folder—her writer techniques; it / they are in her possession now (Pamela hastily made a copy of the folder contents). Our hope for Charlann is that next school year, and in the many to follow, there will be places in the classroom for her, as a developing writer, to take risks with those techniques so that she might grow and prosper in her craft.

Acknowledgment

Charlann Potter, whose name is used with permission, is now a sixth grader at Drake Middle School in Auburn.

For Further Reading

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Our thanks . . .

We owe a great debt to the good-hearted administrators and staff at Auburn University who gave unselfishly of their time, talents, and resources. *Alabama English* could not have been published without their advocacy and assistance.

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Once More, With Feeling

John Bandy

John Bandy has taught a self-contained fifth-grade class at Pinson Elementary School for the past 15 years. He has twice been named Pinson Elementary Teacher of the Year. In 1989 he was named Jefferson County and District Teacher of the Year and was among eight finalists for State of Alabama Teacher of the Year. In 1990 he was presented the runner-up trophy for the Apple Computer, Inc. Alabama Education Award. In 1991 he was the Jefferson County nominee for the Reader's Digest American Heroes in Education Award for 1992. Bandy uses the writing workshop approach to teaching writing. His students have won poetry reading and writing awards over the past two years. Bandy is the author of Visions, *a book of poems and is a past member of the Alabama State Poetry Society. Bandy is an ex-U.S. Army Sergeant-Major and a veteran of Vietnam.*

"What do you want us to write about?" asked Michelle, who always asked questions like that.

"Do we have to?" asked Greg, plaintively. His mind was on football. He'd talked about the Youth Association team tryouts all week.

I had just reminded the class that it was writing time. I had set aside a half hour each Monday, Wednesday, and Friday for writing. It had gone well at first. I had tried hard to come up with a variety of initiating activities to spur the students' creativity. Lately, I had run out of fresh ideas. The kids had become bored, and their writing showed it. They had come to look at writing as just another assignment.

Then it was Angela's turn.

"Why can't we write about the pictures again? I liked the purple one with the dark clouds and the horse standing by the tree."

"We've already written about that," snapped Cheri.

"I liked the one with the blue sky reflected in the lake," Jeremy chimed in from the other side of the room.

Jeremy loved to write. I had praised his paper about that particular picture. It was one of 12 pictures from a calendar I used in the classroom. I had asked the class to write about how each picture made them feel.

I was about to take the calendar from the wall and turn to August, the month that the purple picture was on, when Brad said, "I'm tired of writing! We've been writing all year! Why can't we do something else for a change?"

"Yeah, Mr. Bandy! We need a break," said Robert.

"Please?" asked Christy, pitifully.

I was tempted to snap my finger, frown threateningly, and put an end to this "revolt," but for some reason I didn't. Maybe it was because I was in a kind of rut myself. We had worked hard all year. They were a good bunch of kids, and I had always encouraged them to be honest with me about their feelings, and that is what they were doing. I couldn't scold them for that. Besides, if their hearts weren't in it, the quality of their writing would suffer. I write best when my heart is in it, too. I honestly believe kids respond the same way. They don't always get into routine, unchallenging writing assignments. But give them something with real meaning to write about, something that personally touches their lives, or affects them emotionally, and they will respond enthusiastically every time.

Up to this point, their writing hadn't been that great. Oh, there were a couple of students who could write well about almost anything. But for most of them, writing seemed forced. We had written about our favorite movies, favorite television programs, what we did over summer vacation, and everything else teachers ask kids to write about. Looking back, I now realize that none of these subjects had generated more than lukewarm interest. Journal writing seemed to hold their attention at first, but after a couple of weeks boredom set in, and their journal entries showed it. The students weren't writing from a real experience base, which is the foundation of good and meaningful writing.

I had listened to their complaints a while longer that morning. Then, sensing that a break was needed from what had become a frustrating situation, I had let them use the rest of the period to read silently. It would give me time to regroup. I desperately needed some new ideas. The class needed a shot in the arm to get the kids excited about writing again. They would get it that afternoon, quite unexpectedly.

We had just finished lunch. The class had been looking forward to the afternoon. We were scheduled to go to free play, and I had promised to play touch football with the boys. But it was raining. It wasn't a heavy rain, but puddles had already formed on the road and the ground was soaked. Going outside was out of the question. I could sense their disappointment.

"Well, there goes free play," said Jeffrey, dejectedly, as the class line slowly made its way from the lunchroom. Another class was entering as we were leaving, creating a small traffic jam outside the doorway.

"Why does it always have to rain and spoil everything?" complained Phillip, who was good at finding something or someone to blame for everything. He had once even blamed the telephone company for causing him to miss a homework assignment. But that's another story.

"I hate rain!" muttered Daniel, defiantly.

By now the line had formed in front of the building that housed our classroom.

"Class!" commanded Justin, the class president.

"Ready!" responded the class in unison, assuming the "parade rest" position with their feet slightly apart and their hands clasped firmly at the small of their backs.

"One!" shouted Justin.

"Two!" answered the class as they snapped smartly to attention.

Justin moved to the front of the line and waited for me to give the signal to enter the building. It was a procedure we followed each time we had to leave and re-enter the building. The kids loved this kind of drill. Every year each new class would always ask me if they were going to get to do the "army drill." It was a carryover from my army days, and seemed to instill pride in the class. It was something that only *they* did. It was the thing that made them feel different, and just a little special.

"Have the class stand at ease," I said to Justin. I didn't want to take them in just yet.

"Stand at ease!" commanded Justin over his shoulder without leaving his place at the head of the line.

The class stood quietly in line, probably wondering why I hadn't let them go into the building. I needed to talk to them. No, I needed to *communicate* with them. I was determined that the afternoon was not going to begin like the morning had ended, with most of the kids feeling sorry for themselves and hating the rain.

"There is no reason to hate the rain," I began slowly. "I don't have to remind you that without rain we'd all be in pretty bad shape," I continued, trying hard not to sound like I was beginning a science lecture. I then reminded them of all the benefits of rain and of the earth's need for water, and how, without rain, there would be no rivers, or lakes, or swimming pools, or plants, or water to drink when they were thirsty.

"But I appreciate the rain for other reasons," I went on. "Listening to the rain relaxes me. I like to hear it hitting on the roof of my house. It makes me feel sleepy, especially if it's at night when I'm already in bed. Have any of you ever felt that way?"

I had lowered my voice to just above a whisper. I could hear the rain hitting the canopy above the sidewalk that led to our building. As I spoke, I noticed that the kids had moved a little closer together. The rain seemed to have had a calming effect on them. I saw a faraway look in the eyes of some.

"I'm sure that some of you have had a similar experience, when the rain made you feel relaxed and kinda cozy," I continued, "especially in the wintertime when it was cold outside, and you could lie in bed all snug and warm as you listened to the raindrops hitting against your window. Sometimes I get real drowsy from just watching my car's windshield wipers going back and forth when I'm driving in the rain. Has that ever happened to you?"

The line was completely relaxed now. Their faces reflected a calmness that I had never seen before. They seemed to have forgotten their earlier disappointment about free play. The rain continued its steady beat on the canopy. I looked into their faces as they stood there, patiently waiting for me to continue, realizing, somehow, that they were experiencing something new, something that we were sharing that we had not shared before. I could feel a slight breeze stirring. I was afraid that it would begin raining harder and we would have to go in. I was enjoying the peaceful atmosphere.

"I want you to do something special with me right now," I said confidentially.

A few of the kids turned their heads slowly toward me. Others kept staring out across the playground. Several seemed lost in their own thoughts, responding only by shifting their weight from one foot to the other.

"I want everyone to quietly face to the left and take a step forward so that you are in a position to hold out your hands from under the canopy and feel the rain."

They moved hesitantly to the edge of the sidewalk and slowly, rather sheepishly at first, extended their arms until they were all standing there, like statues, with their arms stretched out at right angles from their bodies.

"Now I want all of you to close your eyes for a moment. I want you to just stand there with your eyes closed and feel the rain." I stressed the word "feel."

I noticed that some of them had moved a little farther out so that the rain was now falling on their faces. It was a gentle rain, the kind you could stay out in without seeming to get very wet.

"Let's just stand quietly now and enjoy this experience," I said softly.

By now I had joined them, and the rain on my face felt refreshingly cool. I shivered slightly as I stood there, but it was more from the excitement of the moment than from the cold. It was unusually warm for that time of year, and it had been all week. The kids also seemed to be caught up in the excitement. As we stood there, faces uplifted, arms extended, I wondered what they were thinking. My own thoughts went back to another time when I had stood in the rain, maintaining a surveillance from a lookout post in Vietnam. It wasn't as relaxing then.

I could hear the sound of another class leaving the lunchroom. The rain had now slackened a little. We stood there a while longer. Then I asked the class to re-form their line and took them, reluctantly, into the building, this time without the drill, as I didn't want to disturb their mood. As we slowly entered the classroom, they were unusually quiet. I asked them to go "quiet heads," as I usually did after lunch while I read to them. This time, however, I didn't feel like reading. Instead, I asked them to take out their writing folders and write about what they had been thinking while standing in the rain. I had purposely left the lights off. I wanted to keep them in the dreamlike state they seemed to be in.

This time there was no grumbling. The entire class began writing, slowly at first, but deliberately, and with obvious feeling. I had never before seen this kind of concentration. As they wrote, now faster, and with a growing excitement, their expressions reflected a level of involvement that told me that this was not going to be "just another assignment." They were totally engrossed in their writing. They continued to write, uninterruptedly, for several minutes. I waited with a growing expectancy as their writing neared completion. Then, with a final flourish, it was over.

First one, then another hand shot up. I silently motioned for them to wait until the others had finished. Soon the room was filled with upraised hands waving frantically for recognition.

"Read mine!" cried one, as I began acknowledging their hands.

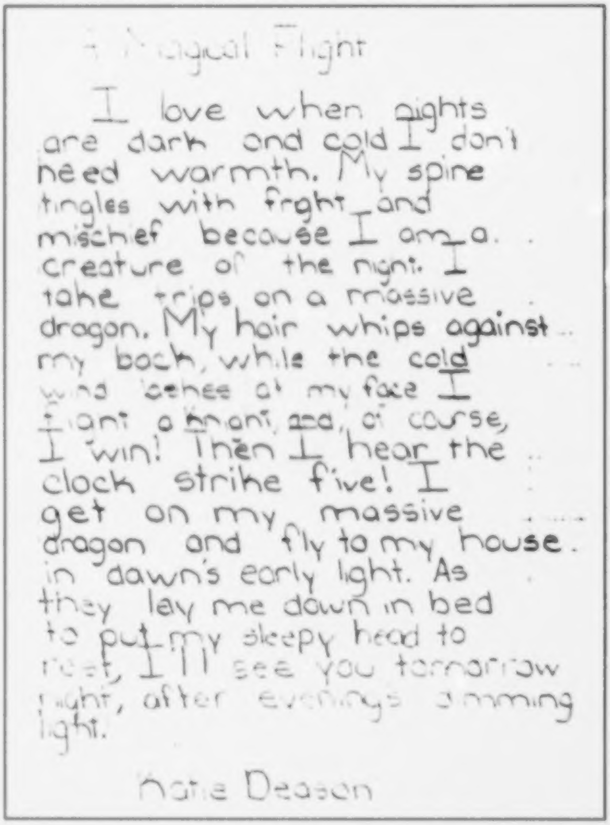
"I was first!" said another, unable to contain his excitement.

I was amazed. This was too good to be true. They had not only demonstrated a newly discovered eagerness to write, but were now competing to be the first to share their writing. I was even more impressed when I read what they had written. I was overcome with the beauty and spontaneity of their thoughts. More than one had associated their experience in the rain with occasions of sadness, such as funerals they had attended or the death of a pet. They had written candidly about this sensitive subject that is too often avoided in our communications with children. Others wrote about how birds looked for worms after a rain, or how cars will splash you if you stand too close to the curb when it is raining. Derrick wrote about how wet he always got on safety patrol duty when it rains. Greg wrote about how muddy he got when playing football in the rain and how far he would slide after being tackled.

I was also impressed with the organization of their writing. Almost all had used a topic sentence, although most of them probably had no idea that they had used one. Adjectives abounded. There were fewer grammatical errors and incomplete sentences. And, while the usual misspelled words were still present, they didn't seem to be as distracting as before. In short, their hastily but enthusiastically written papers were, in most cases, better than anything they had written before and were written without the misgivings or feelings of dread that are often associated with writing assignments.

I attribute the success of this assignment to several factors. To begin with, the atmosphere created by the rain totally relaxed the students. They were completely involved in a personal way with the experience. Second, the assignment was timely. Third, their writing had an emotional base. The experience in the rain had evoked memories of other profound or otherwise memorable experiences. Fourth, a reflective mood for writing had been created and maintained. Finally, the students were motivated to write as a result of the uniqueness of the experience. They were motivated because they were caught up in the excitement of the moment as they stood there, knowing that what they were doing was "different," and that, although they may have felt foolish at first, it was, nevertheless, *their* experience, one that only *they* had been involved in, and one that they could *see, hear, feel, smell,* and even *taste*. It also brought back memories that they could write about with *feeling*. They were eager to share their writings because they knew that they had never before written in such a dramatic setting.

The experience of listening to the rain was serendipitous prewriting, an important beginning for the writing process. Looking back, what the kids demonstrated that day was one of the most important principles of the writing process. As discussed in Ruth Nathan, Charles Temple, and Kathleen Juntanan's *Classroom Strategies That Work*, "students write best about topics that matter to them, to audiences that are interested in their ideas" (1).



A Magical Flight

I love when nights
are dark and cold I don't
need warmth. My spine
tingles with frght and
mischief because I am a
creature of the night. I
take trips on a massive
dragon. My hair whips against
my bach, while the cold
wind lashes at my face I
fight a knight and, of course,
I win! Then I hear the
clock strike five! I
get on my massive
dragon and fly to my house.
in dawn's early light. As
they lay me down in bed
to put my sleepy head to
rest, I'll see you tomorrow
night, after evenings dimming
light.

Katie Deason

Katie, a gifted student, who is totally committed to saving the environment through recycling, reusing, and other "Earth Watch" programs, wrote only on her own terms.

It wasn't the only time we listened to the rain. Each time it rained, the kids would become excited and ask if we could go out and feel the rain again. After the first experience, I didn't have to ask them to write about how the rain affected them. As soon as we returned to the classroom, they began to write on their own. As the number of experiences increased, so did the quality and depth of their writing. Afterwards, they only had to hear the rain to begin writing. They would remind me that it was raining, and to turn out the lights. As they wrote I would sit quietly in the back of the room and put my own thoughts on paper. We had begun assigning sequential titles to our writings—"The Day I Listened To The Rain," "The Second Time I Listened To The Rain." The writing above was done when the rain was accompanied by thunder and strong winds.

We also had many other motivated writing experiences. We wrote, with enthusiasm, letters to students around the world sharing the results of acid rain tests. We wrote, with feeling, to the manager of a dog race track protesting the inhumane treatment of greyhounds who, when no longer competitive, were sometimes put to sleep by their owners. We wrote letters concerning the possibility of lead in the school's drinking water. We wrote letters to the editor about typographical errors discovered in our *Weekly Readers*. We wrote plays, poems, adventure stories, and even "raps" about the benefits of

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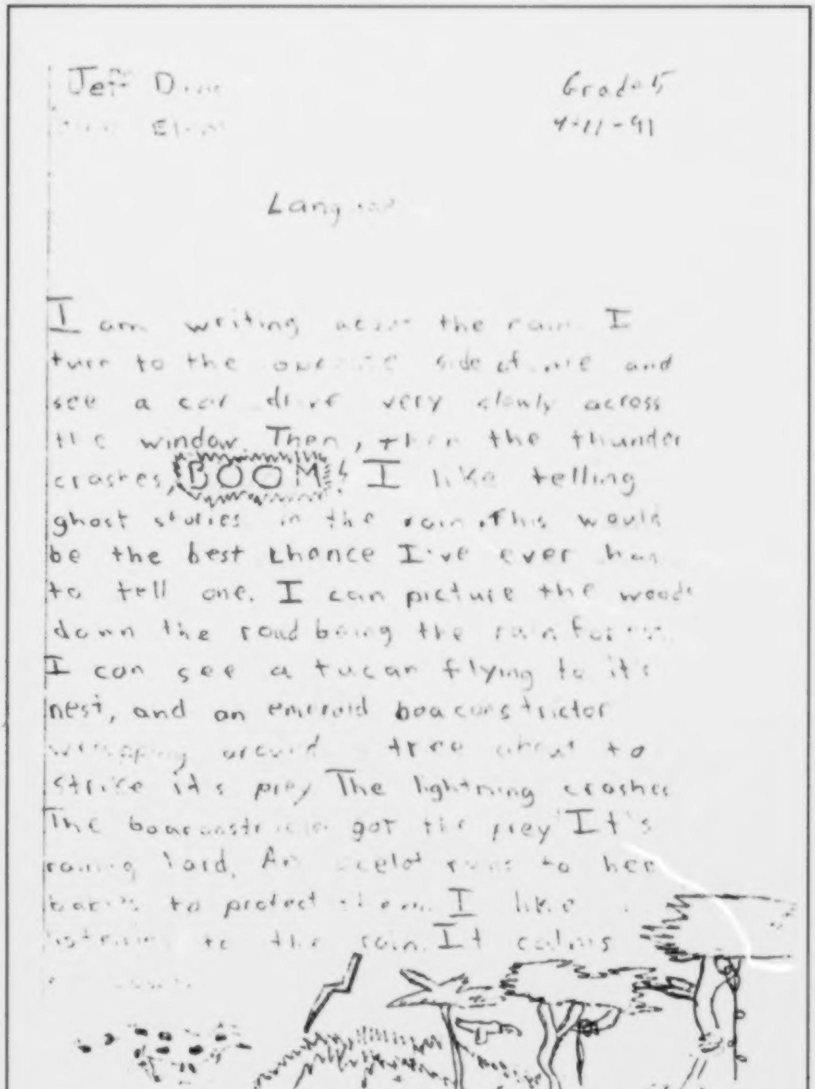

Jeff D[illegible]
[illegible] Elem

Grade 5
4-11-91

Lang[illegible]

I am writing about the rain. I turn to the outside side of me and see a car drive very slowly across the window. Then, then the thunder crashes, BOOM! I like telling ghost stories in the rain. This would be the best chance I've ever had to tell one. I can picture the woods down the road being the rain forest. I can see a tucan flying to it's nest, and an emeroid boa constrictor wrapping around a tree about to strike it's prey. The lightning crashes. The boa constrictor got the prey. It's raining hard. An ocelot runs to her babies to protect them. I like listening to the rain. It calms [illegible]

Jeff is a rather quiet and unassuming child who seldom has much to say. I never realized he had such an imagination.

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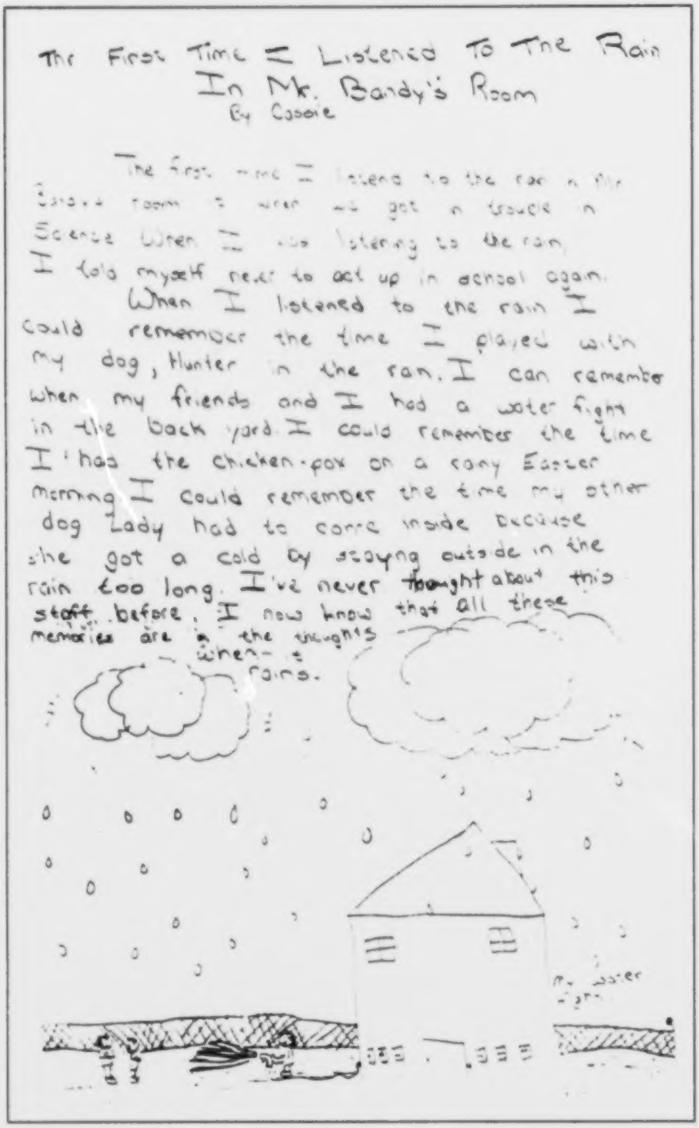

The First Time I Listened To The Rain
In Mr. Bandy's Room
By Cassie

The first time I listend to the rain in Mr. Bandy's room is when we got in trouble in Science. When I was listening to the rain, I told myself never to act up in school again.

When I listened to the rain I could remember the time I played with my dog, Hunter in the ran. I can remember when my friends and I had a water fight in the back yard. I could remember the time I had the chicken-pox on a rainy Easter morning. I could remember the time my other dog Lady had to come inside because she got a cold by staying outside in the rain too long. I've never thought about this stuff before. I now know that all these memories are in the thoughts when it rains.

For Cassie, the experience in the rain unlocked memories of "stuff" she'd never thought much about before the day we listened to the rain.

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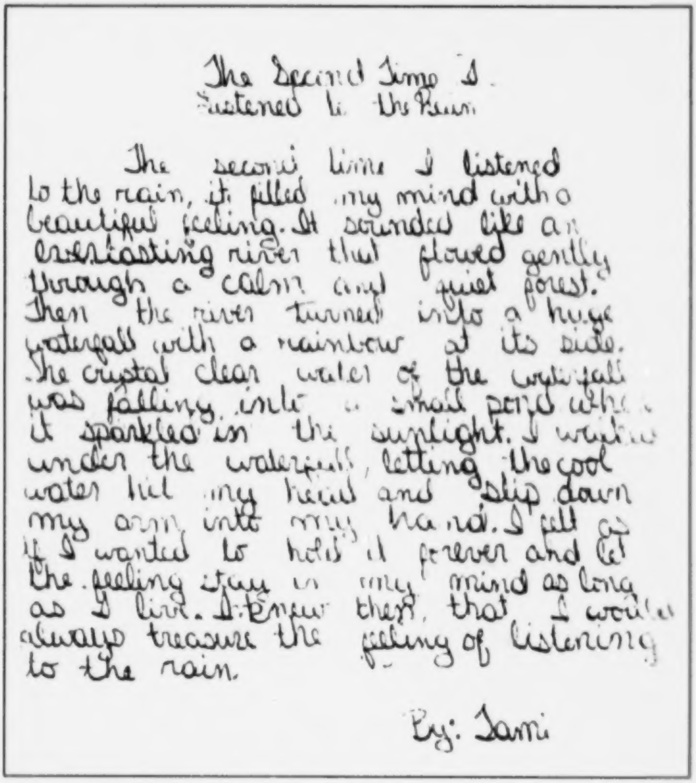

The Second Time I
Listened to the Rain

The second time I listened to the rain, it filled my mind with a beautiful feeling. It sounded like an everlasting river that flowed gently through a calm and quiet forest. Then the river turned into a huge waterfall with a rainbow at its side. The crystal clear water of the waterfall was falling into a small pond where it sparkled in the sunlight. I waited under the waterfall, letting the cool water hit my head and slip down my arm into my hand. I felt as if I wanted to hold it forever and let the feeling stay in my mind as long as I live. I knew then, that I would always treasure the feeling of listening to the rain.

By: Tami

Tami is a gifted child who is very precise in her writing.

reading. The students were now writing in areas other than the "personal experience narrative" that Nancie Atwell speaks of in *In the Middle*. They were writing, with feeling, about "sensible activities appropriate to a wide range of real life situations" (139). The kids had discovered a new outlook on writing. They no longer wanted to write about anything unless they could write about something that had real meaning for them, and I made it my business to never again give them routine, uninteresting writing assignments. If there wasn't something of real value to write about, we just didn't write.

The students all wrote in different styles. Some were more polished in their writing than others. They still had to spend a lot of time editing each other's work. But it got better, and they enjoyed it more. The writing tasks were also different. As shown on pages 13 and 14, some required polished final products; others were more informal, quick responses not revised. As Lucy Calkins says in *The Art of Teaching Writing*, "Teaching writing begins with the recog-

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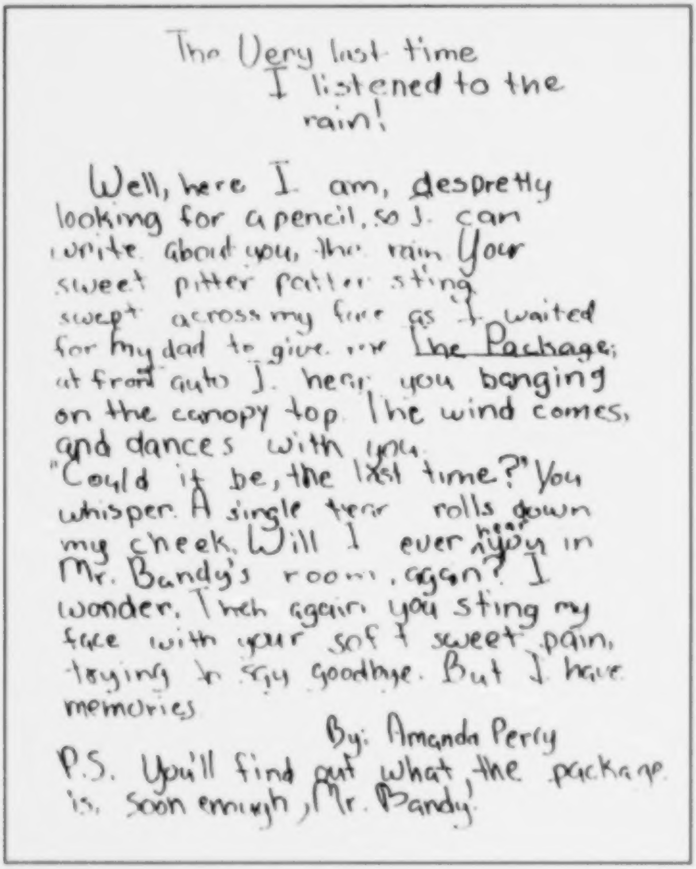

The Very last time
I listened to the
rain!

Well, here I am, despretly
looking for a pencil, so I can
write about you, the rain. Your
sweet pitter patter sting
swept across my face as I waited
for my dad to give me The Package;
at front auto I hear you banging
on the canopy top. The wind comes,
and dances with you.
"Could it be, the last time?" You
whisper. A single tear rolls down
my cheek. Will I ever hear you in
Mr. Bandy's room, again? I
wonder. Then again you sting my
face with your soft sweet pain,
trying to say goodbye. But I have
memories

By: Amanda Perry

P.S. You'll find out what the package
is, soon enough, Mr. Bandy!

Amanda's piece personifies the rain. This is an example of an advanced writing style. She obviously felt a oneness with the rain.

nition that each individual comes to the writing workshop with concerns, ideas, memories, and feelings. Our job is to listen and help them listen" (5). In summary, the students wrote with enthusiasm about things that were real, that were relevant, that they felt strongly about. And isn't that what writing is all about—an experience-based process that allows students to write freely about things that have real meaning for them? The writing on page 15 shows the range of meaningful memories and thoughts the rain inspired.

I realize that unique experiences don't happen every day to provide students with the motivation they need to produce quality writing all year long. But you'd be surprised to find out just how easy it is to recognize opportunities for meaningful moments if you are in tune

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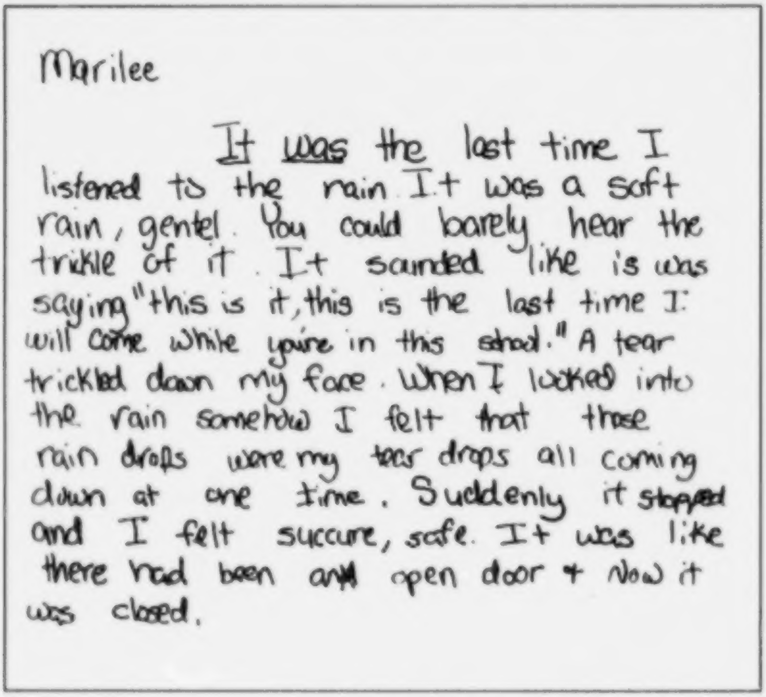

Marilee

It was the last time I listened to the rain It was a soft rain, gentel. You could barely hear the trickle of it. It saunded like is was saying "this is it, this is the last time I will come while you're in this school." A tear trickled down my face. When I looked into the rain somehow I felt that those rain drops were my tear drops all coming down at one time. Suddenly it stopped and I felt succure, safe. It was like there had been an open door + Now it was closed.

Marilee is a bright, outgoing girl with a perpetual smile on her face. I never realized she was capable of writing with such seriousness.

with life and are willing to listen to and trust your students.

The last time we wrote about the rain was a few days before school was out for the summer. It was different this time. As the kids began to write, their mood seemed more serious. Some had sad looks on their faces. Then I realized why. This would probably be the last time we would listen to the rain together. From here they would go on to junior high, perhaps never again to share such meaningful writing experiences. We titled this last piece, "The Last Time I Listened To The Rain In Mr. Bandy's Room." It was one of the most moving experiences I have ever shared with a class. Two examples are shown on page 16 and above.

When we said our last good-byes, we promised each other that no matter where we were, every time we listened to the rain we would remember the beautiful experiences we shared with our writings. I honestly believe that most of them *will* remember and, hopefully, write once more, with feeling, every time they listen to the rain.

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Do the Right Thing

Richard L. Graves

Richard L. Graves is professor of English Education at Auburn University. He has edited Rhetoric and Composition: A Sourcebook for Teachers and Writers, *which is now in its third edition. He has also published some 40 articles and writes poetry and nonfiction as a hobby. His other interests include 'all things folk,' especially folk music and folk dancing.*

Each quarter I ask the students enrolled in my class to keep their writing in a folder, which I review periodically. At the end of the quarter I collect and read through their folders in order to get a sense of their overall growth and achievement. Several years ago, on the next to last day of class, I routinely collected all the folders. In the folder of a student I shall call Adrian was a piece of writing which I shall never forget.

Among the work she had done during the term was another piece of her writing, something she had done spontaneously, something I had not assigned. It was a gripping account of child molestation which had happened to her some 15 years earlier. In terms of quality of writing it was the most powerful of all her writing. It included many of the principles of effective writing which I had been emphasizing, but it seemed to me that Adrian reached that quality, not because of my teaching, but because she was so caught up in her subject. But beyond the quality of writing was another dimension, the obvious pain which Adrian still felt, was feeling. I was immediately confronted with the way professional concerns are sometimes profoundly intertwined with personal concerns.

Needless to say, I was appalled at this graphic account of abuse. Other teachers have talked about reading such accounts in student writing, but this was the first I had seen. I had known Adrian for several months, had come to admire her work, had seen evidence of her growing mind. How could anyone do such a thing? I felt disgust, then anger, and remembered that convicted felons—murderers, thieves, swindlers—all consider the child molester as the lowest form of human life. The event seemed so immediate, so personal. Then I realized that now I too was involved in Adrian's story. As soon as I read it, I had knowledge of it, and knowledge of it makes me a part of it. What should I do? What is a teacher's responsibility in a case like this?

I felt that I had to respond in some way to Adrian's writing, to the event and the pain involved, to Adrian as a person, and to set aside for the moment the question of grading. Not that this was anything extraordinary on my part. Most teachers would likely have done the same. So I wrote at the top the paper, "This is a powerful piece of writing. Please come by to see me as soon as possible."

The next day, which was the last day of class, was routine, but inside I was apprehensive. What would I say? How would I handle the situation? I returned the folders, and at the end of class Adrian approached me. I told her I had read her paper and invited her to my office to talk about it. I wish now that I had recorded our conversation, for whatever she may have gained from it, I learned some very important things in those few minutes. Following is a distillation of our conversation, told now from memory, emphasizing those elements which appear most relevant to teachers. Adrian has read the draft of this manuscript and her response appears at the end.

"My story is real."

The first thing Adrian said was that her writing was real. This was not a story fabricated to shock or impress the teacher, but a true experience. She said this matter-of-factly, as though she were telling me for my own information. Whether I believed her or not, she seemed to be saying, was irrelevant. One of the reasons she never told as a child was the fear of not being believed. Later she told me what an important milestone this writing experience was for her.

Adrian was suggesting that we were both aware of the games which students (and teachers) play about grades. But this situation was much more important. This was real. After carrying a burden of silence for so many years, she was now beginning to overcome it. I felt that Adrian was hoping that I would sense the significance of this writing for her life, and that I would become a kind of partner or ally with her in continuing to overcome this problem. At this crucial moment she needed my support and encouragement, not my criticism.

All I did was listen and offer encouragement. Yet I shudder to think of the potential damage I could have done by rejecting Adrian's writing. A rejection of any sort at this point, it seemed to me, would have had the effect of driving the event back into her conscious mind, negating any of the positive psychological benefits the writing itself brought about. Listening to Adrian, I was reminded of the importance of a supportive posture from the teacher.

"I couldn't sleep—so I got up and started writing."

I asked Adrian to tell me how she came to write about the event. She had carried this burden almost all her life, never daring to mention it to anyone, but something happened that compelled her to write about it.

On the evening before the folders were due, she went to bed as usual but could not sleep. She began to feel the urge to write, and once more the memory came back, all the details, the shame. So she got up and started writing about it, and it all came out. The solitude of the early morning must have provided just the right atmosphere.

"I'll never forget it," she told me. "My room was a mess. The desk was buried under a mountain of clutter. I used the chair as a desk while crouching on the floor. Everything just tumbled out. It was perfect."

Adrian's story illustrates the importance of the role of incubation in the composing process. Through the quarter she had written several pieces, some of them light, others serious, but nothing to suggest the pain and intensity of her final work. It was as though all her previous work was a prelude for this final piece.

"Writing about it really helped."

As Adrian talked I sensed a certain a peace in her manner and voice. She was composed and self-assured that morning, more so than I had ever seen her before. It seemed to me that the experience of writing about her childhood abuse had been greatly beneficial for her. She was relaxed, almost joyous. I sensed this more in her general manner than in what she actually said.

When we talked later she told me how writing about the event helped to resolve it: "Years and years I spent 'finding myself.' Writing about the event, and sharing it, seemed to punctuate the development and recovery of my self-image."

Why is it that we writing teachers say so little about the powerful therapeutic effects of writing? We all know that writing can be a deeply gratifying experience, but we treat that aspect of our discipline like a taboo subject. Some arguments are that a teacher cannot control something so intangible, or that the schools should only "teach facts," or that composition teachers are not psychologists and should therefore not deal with psychological problems. In view of Adrian's story all these rationalizations seem like cerebral evasions of very real problems.

"My writing group has been so supportive."

Throughout the quarter my students met regularly in small groups to read their work and respond to each other. "If it hadn't been for my group," Adrian told me, "I would never have been able to write this. They all write so well and have been so supportive. We're all so close. Everybody took chances. First little ones and then bigger ones. We took chances with different styles and subjects, not just with personal stories."

It is impossible for a teacher to know exactly what goes on in the small groups. Get too close and they freeze up. Stay away and you suspect they are wasting time. Adrian's comment reveals that in her case, for her group, it worked very well.

It may turn out that the main ingredient in a successful group is the chemistry among its members. At least this is what Adrian seems to be saying. Members of her group inspired each other. The closer they got during the quarter and the more their writing improved, then the more positive and motivating the whole experience became.

"I want to tell my story to others."

I was surprised when Adrian told me that she wanted to read her story to her writing response group. She was very calm when she told me this, but also very certain. For years the secret lay buried, but now that it was out, she wanted to tell everyone. I wondered privately whether she might later regret reading her story publicly. Since the term was ending, the groups would no longer meet; consequently there was no opportunity for her to read her account to her group. Whether that was fortunate or not, I'll never know. I had the feeling that Adrian's urge to tell her story was good. I suggested that she might talk with a counselor, who might be able to establish a group situation similar to her response group. But I seriously doubted that would ever happen. It is almost impossible to duplicate the spontaneous trust that grows in some group settings.

Adrian felt that by telling her story she was not only helping herself but others who had experienced and were experiencing similar events: "When I was a child, I thought that I was the only person with this problem. It's important that victims know that their experience is *not* an isolated incident. Somehow I feel that by telling my story, I can allow others to speak up about their own stories, especially those people who may still be suffering direct abuse."

"I want to keep on writing about it."

As we finished our conversation, Adrian asked me about the final exam. "Can I continue writing about this?" I replied that she could. Two points stand out about her second piece of writing. First, she took a large further step: she named the name of her abuser. Second, her writing was full of anger and bitterness. Long after she learned to deal with the shame and the guilt (shame and guilt that weren't hers to begin with) then came the bitterness which she said was all hers.

Now that the story was out, she continued releasing all the pent up rage which had accumulated over the years. I sensed that she would like to continue writing out her story, even beyond the final exam.

Looking back, I can see how easy it would have been to tell Adrian that such writing is not a part of my course, or that this is none of my business. But anyone who would do so is surely not worthy of the name of teacher. Ignoring the situation, under whatever guise or rationalization, is almost as immoral as the act itself. It didn't matter that Adrian was 21 years old, working to put herself through college, or that the event happened years ago. Adrian's writing showed that it was still alive in her conscious and that she was still painfully aware of it.

The positive benefits Adrian derived from writing are infinitely more important than grades. Indeed, in view of the issues involved, it is almost embarrassing to bring up the question of grades, but inevitably we must give grades. A friend once rebelled against the system and gave all his students "Incomplete," but that only delayed the agony. In less than a week I had to decide how to evaluate Adrian's writing.

When she wrote the piece and turned it in, she was not concerned with a grade at that time. "I *needed* to write it," she told me. "I had no choice. I knew no peace would come to my mind until I did. The academic side of me knew that it was good, the details, the description, everything drew in the reader just the way I wanted it. I truly had re-created the experience on paper. I had never fully been able to do that before with any experience, so I turned it in. Before I turned in the paper, I knew I could handle the grade, no matter what."

Throughout the quarter Adrian had vacillated between B and C. She was working part time, commuting, and taking a heavy academic load. But she had shown promise and evidence of good writing. I decided to give her folder the maximum possible credit (20 points) which, combined with a good final exam, gave her a solid B in the course.

My rationale for giving maximum credit for her writing folder was based on my perception that she had achieved something beyond the ordinary. She had "broken through" to a topic which was powerfully important to her. She took a risk, but she sensed that the potential reward, the prospect of absolving the pain she had borne so long, was worth it. Adrian achieved something beyond technical competence. I wanted to reward her for this intangible "something beyond technical competence," this nameless quality in writing which is at once so important and yet so elusive.

There is still one final benefit that can come from all this. From her unique perspective, Adrian can speak directly to us, to writing teachers, and tell us what we can do that would be most beneficial, especially at that crucial time when someone has written so honestly and is so vulnerable. Here in her words is her response:

Many students have very little, if any, writing experience at all especially when it comes to writing about something personal. Often on the first day of class teachers ask students to introduce themselves, to tell about themselves either orally or in a written composition to be read aloud or turned in. Students usually tell about their classes, hobbies, their brothers and sisters, their parents' occupations, etc. without really telling about themselves. In other words, they stick with subjects that are safe but have very little content. Adolescents in particular are self-conscious; they don't want to risk ridicule from their peers in the class or draw unnecessary attention to them-selves. Teachers, please take into account these factors when assigning compositions and grading them. If a student does reach out with a piece of writing that has some worthy content, don't shoot it down with a red ink pen. Instead of concentrating on mechanics, reward the content, reward the effort and risk the student put forth. . . .

These suggestions will apply to all students and their writing, not just those students who write such disturbing pieces. Of course should you ever have a personal piece of writing this sensitive, it would be an assignment you would discuss privately with the writer instead of submitting it anonymously to the class. Discretion is of the utmost importance. Generally speaking, a student would have to feel secure with the teacher to hand over a paper with such a delicate topic. Reject this effort of expression (or escape it, if you will) and the student may retreat into herself and never again climb out on a limb. When I included this writing in the folder I turned in, I had become an adult, sure enough of myself to withstand criticism. Therefore the question of a grade did not affect me the way it might have when I was younger, still grappling with my self-image.

All students (again I stress especially adolescents) recoil at the thought of someone evaluating personal effort. I know that grades are inevitable, but more important than the grade itself is the teacher's reaction. The last thing a vulnerable person needs is criticism or rejection. Your best bet is to be encouraging and supportive and discrete about sensitive topics. That was my experience, and God knows I'm grateful. Writing this allowed ventilation for a very old, very painful experience. . . .

Please, give your students room, security, and support to be creative, and I think the results will surprise you.

Adrian's writing illustrates how personal concerns and professional concerns are sometimes inextricably bound up together. Our teaching should be flexible enough to take situations like this into account. I will always wonder whether I did enough, whether I did the right thing, whether there is a "right thing."

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A Grim(m) Tale

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Once upon a time in the land of Beeson Woods there lived a wicked witch named Miss Clause, a woman of independent means. She had been a teacher of the village children since the nineteenth century. She taught with the grammar book open every day, and the children smothered in chalky fumes as she stirred the words and hung them on the board to dry.

"Don't touch the words!" she would say. "You don't know the rules for using the words! You don't know the rules for using the words! Don't touch the words until you know enough to get them right. Someday you'll be the guardian of this magic brew."

Then, one day a smiling Miss Newcomer came to Beeson Woods. She let all the children touch the words and at first they were so careful. Just to dare handle sacred words that would make powerful magic—they dared not make any mistakes; but the smiling Miss Newcomer, such a stranger in the Woods, said: "Children, take armloads of words and dance with them!" and she did and the children did. A few words fell and some even cracked but when they put the words together! What delicious sounds and brilliant colors they made. The children were enchanted with the magic they had made.

Suddenly Miss Clause appeared at the door. She saw all her wonderful words, her wonderful rules strewn everywhere. Boy, was she mad!

The Initiation Story: A Not-So-Common, Common Reading

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All young people have in common the tests and trials of their transition into adulthood. This explains why an initiation novel such as Mildred Taylor's *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (New York: Bantam, 1976) has special appeal for adolescent readers. Its three main characters—Cassie and Stacey Logan and T.J. Avery—are coming of age in the cotton-growing farmlands of rural Mississippi during the 1930s. However, young readers in the 1990s will recognize problems encountered on their own archetypal journeys to adulthood mirrored in their 1930s counterparts. *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* is appropriate in length (210 pages), in reading level, and in thematic content as a common reading for junior and senior high school students as well as college freshmen. This article offers a classroom-tested approach to this novel by following the format of the Directed Reading Activity: pre-reading, directed silent reading, and post-reading.

The purpose of the Directed Reading Activity (DRA) is to give teachers a structured format for teaching students how to read a text. Its primary goals are to improve students' comprehension skills and to guide students successfully through a reading selection (Tierney, Readence, and Dishner 2). One of the strengths of the three-stage DRA is that it can be adapted to nearly any reading selection at any grade level. The pre-reading stage prepares students for reading by relating the selected text to their past experiences, by creating interest in the text, and by setting their purposes for reading. Purpose-setting activity has been emphasized by learning theorists, particularly E. R. Guthrie, Edward L. Thorndike, and B. F. Skinner, who contend that students are most likely to learn from a text if they ask questions about it and then search the text for answers (Bower and Hilgard 539). This search occurs in the second stage of the DRA, directed silent reading. In this stage students read the selection silently, seeking answers to questions the teacher or the teacher and the students have posed at the end of the pre-reading stage.

The final, or post-reading, stage involves activities that encourage responses to the text, extend skill development, and enrich students' understanding of concepts encountered in the reading selection. Since learning theory suggests that practice with difficult skills will provide the reinforcement necessary to master those skills (Tierney, Readence, and Dishner 4), during this final stage, teachers should have students practice any skills which they were unable to master during the silent reading stage.

These stages of the Directed Reading Activity work well in analyzing an initiation novel such as *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, primarily because of the emphasis on capturing the reader's interest in the subject matter. Educators and learning theorists frequently stress that the best learning occurs when students recognize that mastering the course material will help them achieve personal objectives other than simply making a good grade in the course (Bower and Hilgard 542). Young people reading an initiation novel are themselves in the midst of separating from their parents or attempting to overcome the tests and trials of the transition stage. Thus, they may realize that reading about and discussing how other young people have negotiated these stages will help them achieve their goal of being incorporated into adult society.

Pre-reading

When planning pre-reading activities for *Roll of Thunder*, my objectives were to build background, motivate, and establish purposes for reading. In this stage it is important to help students make connections between where they have been and where they are going. One pre-reading activity which accomplishes this aim focuses on Walt Whitman's poem, "There Was a Child Went Forth." I distribute a copy to each student and then read the poem to the students. The first stanza and the last line read as follows:

> There was a child went forth every day,
> And the first object he look'd upon he became,
> And that object became part of him for the day or a certain part of the day,
> Or for many years or stretching cycles of years.
>
> . . . .
>
> These became part of that child who went forth every day, and who now goes, and will always go forth every day. (qtd. in McMichael 986, 988)

After reading the poem, I ask students what the poet says to them in the first stanza. Do they agree with Whitman that childhood influences have great significance for the kind of adult that child becomes? Then we discuss what kinds of "objects" become a part of the child in Whitman's poem. Students point out objects from nature, from friends and acquaintances, from parents, as well as objects from both the country and the city, from both the early part of the day and the year and the latter part. Then I ask the students what the poet says to them in the last line.

Finally, I direct students' attention to the title of the poem, especially the phrase "went forth." What does this wording indicate? Where does the child go? How far does he go? If students recognize that the child "goes forth" into adulthood, then they are ready to consider some of the difficulties a person can expect to encounter on the journey from childhood to adulthood.

Directed Silent Reading

In preparation for the first silent reading assignment, teachers can help students to develop purpose-setting questions that grow out of their considerations of titles, illustrations, and opening passages. These questions should direct the students as they silently read the assigned pages, searching for answers to the questions that they have constructed. It is important that students read silently rather than aloud because, according to reading specialists, "[silent reading] is more rapid, it is more characteristic of everyday reading needs, and it gives the students an opportunity to use their word attack skills without expressed effort" (Tierney, Readence, and Dishner 3). After students have read the first assignment, then teachers need to discuss the selection with them using the purpose-setting questions. A new set of questions for the next silent reading assignment may grow out of this discussion. If not, teachers should be ready with questions of their own for the students. Students should be encouraged to predict future events and then to check their predictions as they read. This reading-discussion pattern continues for each new portion of assigned text until the entire text has been read.

To help my students set purposes for their initial reading assignment from *Roll of Thunder*, I tell them that the novel we will read together is about three young people who are going forth on the difficult journey into adulthood. Then I begin reading the first chapter to them, asking them ahead of time to try to identify these three young people as we read. The following writing activity works well to structure purpose-setting questions for the first three chapters:

> Using the Whitman poem as a model, write your own poem listing the objects, events, and people who become a part of Cassie Logan's life in chapters one through three. You may copy the first four lines of Whitman's poem word for word. Be specific in your listing as your poem will serve as your plot summary for class discussion. As a bonus, you may keep your poem in front of you during the daily quizzes over each reading assignment.

After reading the first three chapters, we spend one class session discussing the concept of the initiation archetype. I tell students *Roll of Thunder* is a story about three young people who are going through a kind of initiation. Then I ask if they have ever been initiated into a club or if they have known people who have gone through initiations. Subsequent to our discussion of the kinds of disagreeable, sometimes even dangerous activities which people are willing to undergo in order to be initiated, I ask if the students would be willing to do these things. If so, exactly what does membership in these clubs or groups represent to them?

A productive follow-up to these questions is to have volunteers research initiation ceremonies among such cultural and ethnic groups as American Indians, Jews, and Australian aborigines. I explain that initiation into adulthood has often been symbolized as a journey or quest involving three stages. Drawing a diagram of a winding road labeled "The Road to Adulthood" with signposts for the three stages—SEPARATION, TRANSITION, and INCORPORATION—aids students in understanding this concept. I put this diagram on the chalkboard and use an example of initiation ceremonies among Plains Indians to illustrate the stages.

Leaving the diagram on the board, I ask students if we practice any rites of passage into adulthood in our society. If they say "no," I ask if they can think of anything which marks the point in young people's lives when they begin to separate themselves from their parents. Here they usually mention such things as getting their own phones, getting a driver's license, starting to date, and going away to college.

After explaining that *Roll of Thunder* is an example of an initiation story, I prompt students to look back at the first three chapters for any examples characteristic of the separation stage. What is the significance of the Berry burnings or of taking revenge on the bus? I then inform the class that the transition stage comprises the major portion of this novel, with most of the following elements appearing in this stage:

- Introduction of a mentor(s)
- Physical and spiritual pain
- A loss of innocence usually symbolized by a physical loss
- Experiences involving birth, death, and rebirth
- A journey
- Significance in seasons of the year
- Awakening sexuality
- Revelation and recognition

With this background, the class is ready for the following assignment:

> Write each of these elements on a separate 4"x 6" notecard. As you read the remaining chapters, list examples of these elements as they occur in the plot and write your thoughts about how these elements relate to the journey to adulthood for Cassie, Stacey, or T. J. You may not find examples of all the elements, but you should find most of them.

Using this structure, we discuss the remaining chapters in groups of two or three chapters per class session, with students doing their silent reading outside of class.

Post-reading

After students have finished reading the novel, teachers should use enrichment activities to clarify, reinforce, and extend students' understanding of concepts in the story. If these concepts are applied to activities beyond the story, such applications should enhance and extend the new learning. These collateral activities include creative projects, research work, and extended reading.

One enrichment activity which helps students clarify their understanding of the story is the Classroom Press Conference. I select three students to play the parts of Cassie, Stacey, and T. J. All other students are reporters with instructions to prepare questions for these three characters about any confusing actions or events which occur at the end of the novel. If I need to help the reporters get started asking their questions, some of the following are possibilities:

- T. J., what were you thinking about when you were standing in the Great Faith churchyard? Why did you come to Stacey after R.W. and Melvin beat you up? Why didn't you get rid of the gun? What did it mean to you? Why did you want it so much?
- Stacey, since T. J. was the cause of your mother's being fired, why did you help him after he was beaten up? Why did you run off into the forest at the end of the story? Is it because of your loss of T. J.? Have you suffered other losses in this story which help prepare you for this final loss?
- Cassie, why are you crying at the end of the story? What do you mean when you say you're crying "for T. J. and the land"? How is your crying related to the title of the novel, *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*? To the words of the spiritual?

When students have had ample opportunity to ask all their questions, I have them vote by secret ballot on whether or not each of the three initiates—Cassie, Stacey, and T. J.—actually becomes incorporated into adult society at the end of the novel. An alternate activity is to have students draw stick figures representing Cassie, Stacey, and T. J. where they think each is positioned along "The Road to Adulthood" at the end of the novel. Several students could then present their diagrams and justify their positioning of the three young characters. Most classes will agree that Stacey is incorporated, that Cassie is well along in her journey, but that T. J. never becomes incorporated, or at least not until it is too late.

Themes based on events in the plot and associated with the stages of initiation suggest a number of profitable writing assignments which enhance students' understanding of these stages. Short narrative essays or five-minute memory writings could be focused on these separation-stage topics: "My First Day in Junior High (in Senior High; as a College Freshman)"; "The Day I Got My License"; and "My First Car (Job)." Journal or diary entries, essays, and poems are some of the types of writing appropriate for transition-stage themes. The friendship theme centering around Stacey and T. J. and Stacey and Jeremy suggests such topics as "My Enemy, My Friend" or "The Friend You Love to Hate," and the question, "Are there any flutes under your bed?" For the theme of innocence versus knowledge or experience, begin by asking if the class thinks children know too much too soon today. Discuss the kinds of "knowledge" they get from movies and television. Then have them write on "Things Bo Wishes Bo Didn't Know." Define and discuss mentors. Have them respond to the question, "Can you succeed in having a mentor, without really trying?"

Feeling different, or as James W. Johnson puts it, feeling "the isolation and loneliness of the individual in a world of similar but alien beings" (qtd. in Agee 1023) is one of the greatest trials of the transition stage for modern adolescents. This element of difference is brought forward in *Roll of Thunder* in a number of ways: being different in race or class from the majority population; being different from other members of the adolescent's race and class; being different from all the other members of the adolescent's own family; and being different in size and strength.

Joining a gang is one means used by characters in *Roll of Thunder* to deny this difference. Ask if there were any gangs, even if called by other names, in rural Mississippi in 1933. Students should recognize that the "night men" are a gang. Then ask if there were any other gangs in the story. Here they should respond that T. J., R. W., and Melvin are a gang. What motivates T. J. to join this gang? Is it a way of holding on to childhood, another way of refusing to grow up? Have students write a persuasive essay arguing one of these premises:

- Being the same as others in your group makes it harder to grow up.
- Being different from others in your group makes it harder to grow up.

Another characteristic of the transition stage that Johnson identifies is "conflict within the family" (qtd. in Agee 1023). Discuss or debate the topic of parental responsibility for the behavior of their adolescent children. Are T.J.'s parents to blame for his choices? Just how responsible are parents? Should parents be fined or jailed if their children are caught out after curfew or if they commit a crime? When do children get old enough to take their own responsibility? Have students respond to one or more of these questions in a short argumentative essay or in a classroom debate.

Learning to cope with death and dying, often a part of the transition stage, is a process which students need help in understanding. In *Roll of Thunder,* who dies? Who is threatened with death? How do the various characters in the story handle the threat of death that hangs over them? What, if anything, is worth dying for to these characters? Discuss T. J.'s statement about the pearl-handled pistol in the merchantile. What does this gun symbolize for T. J.? Then ask students what, if anything, is worth dying for today. If nothing is worth dying for, then what is worth living for? Have students write a one-page response to the following open-ended statement: "If it were necessary, I would die for ___________________."

Finally, it is important for students to understand the significance of the theme of crying, especially as it is associated with the loss of innocence. Ask who cries in the story. When do these characters cry? What are the motivations for crying in this story? What are the component elements of the crying? Injustice? Surprise? Recognition? Frustration? Anger? Longing for a better country? Longing for the spiritual? A cry for what ought to be but isn't? A cry against ignorance and waste?

Make copies of the newspaper article, "Teen Wanted in Slaying Kills Self" (*Montgomery Advertiser,* November 18, 1990). This is an account of the drive-by slaying of five-year-old Ashley Johnson while she played hopscotch at a birthday party. Rance Benson, 18, was wanted for questioning in the slaying, and when police went to his apartment, he barricaded himself in a bedroom and shot himself in the head. The shots that killed Ashley were apparently intended for a group of rival gang members nearby.

Ask the students why we cry after reading this article and for whom we are crying. Have students rewrite the story of the shooting from the first person point of view of Rance Benson or one of Ashley's parents or one of the other children at the party. Students could write either a ballad telling the story or a poetic tribute to Ashley.

Along with the discussions, debates, and writings amplified above, the following are suggestions for final projects on *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*:

- A poem listing the major objects, events, and people in your life modeled on Whitman's "A Child Went Forth."
- A poster (or collage) showing the cycle of the seasons from the beginning to the end of the novel with significant events plotted on the circle.
- An essay comparing and contrasting David and Hammer as mentors for Stacey.
- Illustrations of three scenes of your choice from the novel. Use a dominant color to set the mood for each scene.
- A maxim is defined as a general truth, fundamental principle, or rule of conduct—a proverb-like statement. Find and list at least 10 maxims spoken to Stacey and Cassie by their mentors.
- Do further research on one of the topics suggested in class discussion and submit a three-page paper.

Small-group Reading

Following the common reading of *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, students should be encouraged to read one of the following four books in preparation for small group discussions:

To Kill a Mockingbird—Harper Lee

A Day No Pigs Would Die—Robert Newton Peck

Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl—Anne Frank

The Leaving—Lynn Hall

These books would be appropriate for various ability levels within a class and would aid students in practicing on their own the skills introduced during the common reading of *Roll of Thunder*. In small-group reading, I give students information about each of the prospective texts and help them as they make their selection for independent reading. As a pre-reading activity, I give book talks on each book, trying to be sure students have an idea of what kinds of characters, themes, tone, and style to expect. Second, I ask students to look at the following themes and relationships as they read and be prepared to focus on these aspects of the book in their small group discussions:

- Does the young person in this story have a mentor? If so, in what ways is that mentor important to him or her?
- What is the situation in the world that surrounds this young person? How does it affect him or her?
- In what ways is this story an example of the initiation pattern?

- What changes in relationships occur between the young person and other characters in the story?
- Does the young person gain wisdom? How would you state what he or she learns?

Summary

Because of *Roll of Thunder's* teaching potential illustrated above, it makes an excellent choice as a common reading experience. Its can't-put-it-down plot, its inspiring yet realistic characters, and its initiation theme set 60 years in the past combine to create a book that students will read. And, once they have read it, they will find themselves compelled to deal with its values. What more can we ask of any work of literature?

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Finding a Way In—Thinking a Way Out: Moving Creatively from Prewriting to Drafting

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In the early nineteenth century, the utopian society of New Harmony was founded along the banks of the Wabash River in southern Indiana. One of the town's landmarks was an elaborate labyrinth created by concentric circles of hedges about four feet high. The maze led to a small grotto in the center; its rustic exterior belied the beauty inside. According to the society's leader, the labyrinth symbolized the difficult path of life a person must travel before gaining heavenly rewards. Visitors were sometimes led to the center and left to discover the way out. As one Englishman wrote, "in a large pleasure garden is a curious labyrinth, out of which none but those who formed it, or are well acquainted with it, can find their way" (Arndt 277).

Finding a Way In

For me as a writer and teacher of writing, the labyrinth symbolizes the composing process. Writers wind their way through their thoughts, gathering ideas, searching for what they want to write about. Many strategies help writers find ways into their writing: looping, mapping, free writing, brainstorming, clustering, nutshelling, tree diagrams, turkey tracks, rough drafts, metaphors, crazy contrasts, topoi, cubing, reporter's formula, listing, heuristics, response journals, commonplace books. A writer with knowledge of or interest in a topic can usually find plenty to say about it.

But upon finding a way into a topic, a writer's work is far from complete. Rather, the writer must also think a way out, deciding on an approach for choosing content, organization, syntax, and words. Without belittling the importance of "finding a way in," I will concentrate in this essay on "thinking a way out" because much promising prewriting that students do results in unimaginative drafts when they fail to move creatively from prewriting to drafting.

Thinking a Way Out

A teacher in the Louisiana State University Writing Project calls the phenomenon I want to investigate the "Poof." One minute you have no idea how to write a paper or poem and then the next—poof—you know just what to do. Stephen Tchudi calls this experience the "Write Idea":

> There is a crucial moment in my composing process when I get what I call the Write Idea. This is more than just a "good idea" for a piece of writing. It certainly involves more than simply responding to an "assignment" . . . In fact, a Write Idea extends beyond the limits of a flat sheet of paper and involves seeing connections between my past experience, the writing task at hand, and the impact of some writing on an audience, known or imagined. A Write Idea centers on *having a sense of the possibility of managing and completing a piece of writing*. It involves some sort of "message" or expressive idea, but it also includes a sense of *how to do it*. . . . It involves having a vision of the piece of writing as a whole, complete thing: a product. Prior to the moment of the Write Idea, I may have a head or briefcase full of notes and ideas, and I may have a pressing manuscript deadline, but I will not be able to write.
>
> The arrival of a Write Idea often has elements of the "Ah ha!" or "Eureka!" experience for me (272-73).

Alas, Tchudi concedes, "One cannot teach students how to generate Write Ideas, but the teacher can encourage the process" (275). I believe we can do more than encourage; we can talk about the process, model it, and begin to demystify it by identifying strategies that work for us and others. To do otherwise is to sit waiting—for inspiration, for the light, for the muse—waiting. Such an attitude fosters the notion that writing creatively is something only some can do—a matter of luck.

I propose, instead, that we try to account for our insights, to identify ways of thinking that lead to the Write Idea, the Poof, the Eureka! In *The Mind's Best Work*, D. N. Perkins urges people who wish to be more creative to invent their creative behavior: "people should think about, criticize, revise, and devise the ways they do things important to them" (218). While some writers hesitate to talk about their writing processes, fearing that critical examination might destroy their abilities, I agree with Perkins that "far from being contrary to insight, reasoning is an important means to insight, and often a neglected one" (71). Creative insight does not depend on some special mental activity completely apart from reasoning.

Before going further, let me offer an operational definition of creativity, one borrowed from Donald MacKinnon and his colleagues at the Institute of Personality Assessment and Research at the University of California, Berkeley:[1]

> . . . true creativeness fulfills at least three conditions. It involves a response or an idea that is novel or at the very least statistically infrequent. But novelty or originality of thought or action, while a necessary aspect of creativity, is not sufficient. If a response is to lay claim to being a part of the creative process, it must to some extent be adaptive to, or of, reality. It must serve to solve a problem, fit a situation, or accomplish some recognizable goal. And,

> thirdly, true creativeness involves a sustaining of the original insight, an evaluation and elaboration of it, a developing of it to the full (485).

One feature of this definition is its applicability to "nearly any domain of organized human activity . . . including, but not restricted to, the arts, science, technology, business, and public affairs" (Harrington 146). Thus by extension, creativity can be a feature of any kind of writing—non-literary as well as literary—that is original and adaptive to a task and audience and that realizes its goals through written expression.

In this essay, I will describe three cases where writers have moved creatively from prewriting to drafting and speculate about what accounts for their successes. I call these approaches generative refocus, purposeful organization, and audience analysis. Supporting modern theories of creativity, these approaches represent ways that I have seen successful writers compose. The approaches themselves are certainly not new; however, they are seldom presented as avenues to creativity. Vincent Ryan Ruggiero in *Composition: The Creative Response* explains:

> Even though millions of compositions are produced each year by amateurs and professionals, every successful composition is in some way unique. The opportunities for creativity in writing are inexhaustible. That they are often unrealized is largely attributable to the popular misconception that originality lies in ignoring convention. The fact is that originality in writing is more readily achieved by honoring discipline and tradition than by opposing them. The greater a writer's mastery of both self and the rhetorical principles and strategies proven effective over the centuries, the freer that writer is to make the choices that will express his or her creativity (xvii).

Following a discussion of the three approaches, the essay concludes with suggestions for teachers to help student writers to be more creative.

Generative Refocus

In *Uncommon Genius*, Denise Shekerjian identifies common attitudes, traits, and working styles that foster creative impulses in 40 winners of MacArthur Awards, those six-figure, no-strings-attached grants which allow individuals from various fields freedom to pursue their interests. One talent that several of her subjects share is an ability to refocus the familiar in a novel way. She writes, "a shift of perspective is a break with habit, a departure from cliché, a deviation from convention. A shift in perspective opens you up to something new, something you haven't considered before, something startling, something important. The realizations that flow from a fresh frame of mind are fuel for the creative impulse, the firecracker explosions of new ideas" (106).

Reviewing prewriting with an eye for the new or unusual can support the kind of original perspective that leads to a creative, generative refocus. To illustrate this approach, I offer an example from a writer who was assigned to describe his bedroom, an exercise designed to teach specificity. His teacher instructed him to begin his prewriting with a fact sheet—a list of 15 things he knew about his topic. Here is his list:

1. Queen size bed

2. Silver brown carpet
3. Dark brown chest of drawers
4. Small closet
5. Small color tv
6. Dark brown bedside stand that matches chest of drawers
7. Coin change always on chest of drawers
8. Brown bed spread
9. Indian headdress on wall
10. Indian pictures on wall
11. Indian statues on dresser and bedside stand
12. Bed hardly ever made
13. Mirror on closet door
14. Magazines under bed (*Wildlife* and dogs)
15. Dog bed in corner where cocker spaniel sleeps

Using his fact list, the student generated the following paragraph:

MY BEDROOM

> My bedroom is one of my favorite places. It has a silver brown carpet on the floor. I have a rather small closet which holds all my clothes and which is always a mess. My bed is also always a mess. It is a queen size bed and it has a brown bed spread, but it is usually unmade. In one corner I have a chest of drawers that is dark brown; on it I keep my change. I also have an Indian statue on the chest of drawers. My bed side stand matches the chest and also has an Indian statue on it. My small color TV set is across the room next to the closet door. On my right wall I have some Indian pictures and on the opposite wall there is an Indian headdress. I have some *Natural Wildlife* magazines and some magazines about dog raising which I keep under my bed. A dog bed is in the corner where my cocker spaniel sleeps.

Typical of inexperienced writers, this student has translated his fact list—with only slight reorganization and little critical thought—into an unimaginative paragraph. His prewriting has become his writing; the draft suffers as a result. Although the paragraph has specific details, it lacks an original refocus that might make the bedroom more visual or more memorable for the reader.

In a conference, the teacher asked the student what he thought an outsider might find interesting or different about the bedroom. The student decided the Indian motif best distinguished it. With that refocus in mind, the student revised his paragraph:

MY BEDROOM

> When first walking into my bedroom most people think of Indians. This is probably due to all of the Indian decorations all over my room. On my right wall, above my bed, I have paintings of Indians robbing trains, hunting buffalo, and so forth. On the opposite wall I have a beautiful hand-made eagle feather headdress. On my chest of drawers I have two different Indian statues: one is of an Indian girl dipping water and the other is of an Indian chief smoking a peace pipe. Of course my bedroom doesn't stay as clean as a tepee. There are usually loose change, books, pencils, and papers scattered over my chest of drawers. My rather small closet that barely holds all of my clothes always stays a mess. When first entering my bedroom, a

> person might think of Indians, but when leaving, he will probably think I need a maid.

Indians became the student's clever way out. His generative refocus enabled him to select unusual ideas from his prewriting and to create the final pun.

We cannot say for certain what triggers a generative refocus. It may be a recurring pattern, an unusual detail, a salient point. Donald Murray claims it is surprise—"the most significant element in writing. . . the motivating force that makes writers of us and of our students" (7). Perhaps surprise is what makes the refocus generative, what intrigues the writer to see how the piece will take shape with the new idea in mind. Certainly refocusing involves looking closely at prewriting for a way out. Ian Graham, an archaeologist in Shekerjian's study, claims that "what is helpful to creativity is training the eye to *notice* things, to observe closely and precisely." Shekerjian elaborates:

> If you do that, it is likely you will discover things other people call luck, but, in fact, you've simply noticed something that has escaped the hurried man's attention. Often in creative work it is not the manipulation of high-flown theoretical abstractions that matters so much as one's ability to notice the concrete, the precise, and the particular details.

She calls this "the luck of having noticed" (151, 153).

Purposeful Organization

"The essence of invention isn't process but purpose. Purpose is what organizes the diverse means of the mind to creative ends," Perkins contends. "Discovery depends not on special processes but on special purposes" (100-01). In other words, we don't sit down with pen and paper merely *to be* creative. Rather, we write with a purpose in mind *to make* or *to do* something—to write a letter, a poem, a memo, an essay in order to back a candidate, woo a lover, get a raise, impress a teacher. By clearly identifying our purposes, we can then match them with appropriate organizations to think a way out of our writing dilemmas.

Let me illustrate this approach with a classroom exercise I use to teach relationships between topic sentences and organization. I begin by giving students the following paragraph:

> MY SISTER
>
> She is a girl. She stands about 5'1". She has black hair. It is naturally curly. It's cut short because it's easier to take care of. She has brown eyes. She doesn't wear any makeup. She's fairly pretty. She has pierced ears. She is 18 years old. She wears jeans and t-shirts to school. She smokes cigarettes. She wears neon socks and Nike Airs; she's very picky about things everyone else does. She is very sensitive but tries to hide it by acting tough, but she can't hide it. The only thing she has for breakfast is a glass of milk. When she is done with her gum, she just rolls it up in a ball and puts it on the coffee table. Usually she gets in late. She is in the twelfth grade and is too lazy to get a job. Her report card is no big deal. Her hobby is collecting giraffes.

Much like the student's first attempt at describing the bedroom, this student's free writing merely inventories characteristics with no particular focus and no clear purpose beyond a general description of the sibling. I ask my students to imagine why someone might write about his or her sister. They propose various purposes—to explain to someone what it is like to live with her, to try to understand her, to persuade another to see her in a particular way. We then match purposes with organizational patterns and generate some original topic sentences to guide them from free writing to drafting. Here are three possible lead-ins to a new draft, each with a different purpose and organization:

Let me tell you about a typical day in the life of my sister.

Purpose: to explain what it is like to live with her

Organization: chronological narration

My sister can't decide if she's a little girl or a grown up woman.

Purpose: to try to understand her actions

Organization: comparison and contrast

You should ask my sister for a date.

Purpose: to persuade

Organization: induction

Working in groups, students then write a paragraph using one of these lead-ins or one of their own, adapting information in the first paragraph to suit their purposes. Finally, we read the new drafts aloud to compare and contrast the content and organization. Here is one group's efforts:

> You should ask my sister for a date. With dark brown eyes and curly black hair, she's a natural beauty—no need for make-up. And just like you, she's a casual dresser—t-shirt, jeans, wild socks, Airs, even pierced ears! I'll bet if you asked her out for tonight, she'd be free to go since she doesn't have a job and never studies. Why not take her to the fair? If you win her a stuffed giraffe, she'll be your friend forever. No need to bring her home early since she loves staying out late. Have fun—just don't let her chew gum in your car!

This paragraph is not only more interesting to the reader but also more fun for students to write. They enjoy creatively manipulating the facts to support their purpose. Shekerjian found that

> what carries creative people through from conception to the completion of a project is drive and concentration born from a sense of purpose. Purpose is what dictates the entire range of the enterprise. Through intention, goals are shaped and ideas are generated to fulfill them. (141)

By knowing their purpose and choosing an organization to accomplish it, students can begin to think a way out of their prewriting into a good first draft.

Audience Analysis

As beauty is judged by the beholder,

so successful writing is judged by the reader. John S. Dacey in *Fundamentals of Creative Thinking* reminds us that "it is only within a particular context that a product can be judged. When it has a distinct appropriateness, it generates a feeling of intense satisfaction in the observer" (11). Robert W. Weisberg reaches a similar conclusion in *Creativity: Genius and Other Myths—What You, Mozart, Einstein, and Picasso Have In Common*: "An artistic work becomes a work of genius only when it moves an audience. . . ." He argues that genius lies not in an individual but rather in "the interaction between a work of art and the sensibility of an audience" (85-86). Although we are more likely to recognize creativity than genius in our writing and in that of our students, it is audience reaction to the written product that determines its success. Linda J. Carey and Linda Flower remind us that "creative responses to the rhetorical problems raised by school, professions, and public-life are necessary on a regular basis for these groups to sustain what others see as quality work." They call this kind of insight "practical creativity" (1).

Analyzing the audiences for whom we are writing can lead to creative decisions about content and form—decisions that can lead us out of the egocentric thinking that often characterizes prewriting. Let me illustrate with an example from my own writing. I'd been asked to review *The Psychology of Written Communication* for *The Journal of Business Communication*. Having jotted a few marginal notes as I read the book, I'd finished my prewriting, but I was unsure how to begin my critical response. How could I condense 300 pages into 500 words? Coincidentally, the week before the review was due, I attended the national conference of the organization which publishes the journal. When I realized that the audience who would read my review was essentially the same audience who was attending the conference and when I saw that the conference program and the book's table of contents listed similar issues, I'd thought my way out. Here's how the review began:

> If the topics discussed at the National ABCA conference in Phoenix last October accurately reflect our professional interests, then *The Psychology of Written Communication*, edited by James Hartley, deserves our attention. The conference emphasized three themes: the multidisciplinary nature of teaching business writing, the impact of new technology on communication, and the need for an international exchange of research on writing. *The Psychology of Written Communication* addresses these themes.

By this example, I do not mean to suggest that purpose, organization, and content were not also concerns while I wrote; they were. Indeed, Carey and Flower report that writers who produce successful, innovative texts tend to develop plans in all these categories (including audience) before they begin writing (15). But I distinctly remember that it was my insight into the needs and interests of my audience that triggered for me the Write Idea. Once I had it, the review practically wrote itself.

Guiding the Process

Ruggiero advises: ". . . keep in mind that what many people call writing talent is often no more than creative application of writing techniques, and there is no magic in that" (107-08). Thus, it is the way we teach focus, purpose, and audience that can make a difference. How then can we help students use familiar rhetorical devices to move *creatively* from prewriting to drafting? Let me suggest new twists to three common pedagogical tools: assignments, conferences, and evaluation.

Writing assignments can be redesigned to elicit the kind of critical thinking that makes the move from prewriting to drafting more inventive. Jacob Getzels and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi found in their study of creativity in art that "the main elements of creativity . . . are the formulation of a problem, the adoption of a method of solution, and the reaching of a solution." They identify two scenarios—"*presented problem situations* where the problem has a known formulation, a routine method of solution, and a recognized solution" and "*discovered problem situations* where the problem does not yet have a known formulation, a routine method of solution, or a recognized solution" (79). Rather than designing assignments that present problems, we may want to encourage students to discover problems[2], to offer students what Eleanor M. Hoffman and John P. Schifsky call "freedom within a framework." Compare these two examples:

> **Presented problem assignment:** How is your mother's life different than your grandmother's? In a brief essay, compare and contrast such areas as work, family, and recreation.
>
> **Discovered problem assignment:** Although each of us belongs to a family unit, the make up and nature of our families differ widely. What's interesting, unusual, troubling, unique, outstanding about your family? Write a piece to be included in a class anthology about families.

The first example solicits a connect-the-dots, paint-by-number five paragraph theme. The latter example invites students to choose the specific subject and even the genre. Sometimes by trying to simplify an assignment for students, we limit their creativity. Writing assignments that address real situations, serve real purposes, and are read by real audiences may invite more creative responses than those that narrow the topic, identify the problem, and sometimes even specify the organizational pattern for students who write only for their teachers.[3]

Writing conferences between teachers and students are frequently held to guide revision; however, students benefit from individual help with the discovery process too. Prewriting is like a treasure map which students must learn to read if they are to discover the original ideas hidden there. For example, they may have drawn elaborate clusters but not know how to interpret and use the ideas to shape a draft. Working with a student's prewriting, a teacher can pose questions to lead the student to discover a generative focus, articulate a purpose, or describe the needs of an audience. Conferences on prewriting can be risky, however. It is sometimes tempting to do the hard work for students by showing a way out—often one that they cannot follow for various reasons. Instead, students learn more from a teacher who points them in the right direction but lets them chart their own course even if they take a scenic wrong turn, rather than one who hands them a AAA triptik with the conventional route highlighted.

Evaluation can be rethought to encourage creativity in the written product in two ways. One is to postpone evaluation as long as possible; the other is to recognize and reward creativity in the final product.

Students need plenty of time to work on their writing before it is graded. Delaying the grade (perhaps by adopting a portfolio approach in which students choose pieces to be evaluated at the end of six weeks or a semester) allows time for thinking the best way out. I am reminded of a Lockhorns's cartoon in which Leroy, nearly asleep in his hammock, assures a glowering Loretta, "I'm working on cleaning out the garage. I'm in the planning stage." Sometimes writers are writing when they don't appear to be. They may be taking a shower or riding to school when the Write Idea comes. Previously, researchers attributed such breakthroughs to unconscious incubation, time away from the immediate task. James Britton, for example, describes the writing process in terms of preparation, incubation, and articulation. Although recent studies have found little evidence to support the role of the unconscious in leaps of insight, they do support the value of "'creative worrying' . . . brief episodes of mulling over the problem while one does something else during the break." Furthermore, breaks from the actual writing task may allow us to return to it with renewed energy and a fresh approach (Weisberg 24, 31). Whether it is our unconscious or conscious facilities at work, we know that it is difficult to hatch creative writing in 50 minutes. Students need time to explore various avenues rather than taking the first way out; they need time to think longer and better about what they want to say. Perkins suggests that:

> Ideas and products are not so original and effective as they could be because of premature closure. Better performance occurs sometimes because a person seeks out and chooses from many options, but more typically because the person maintains clear and high standards that lead to looking longer for a suitable solution. (140)

Immediate deadlines and final evaluations can block the initiative and opportunity to develop writing creatively.

A second way to reform our evaluation methods is to look for, recognize, and reward creativity in the product. William Covino suggests that we fail to measure creative fluency in student writing in part because we have yet to establish it as an academic value. He explains, "although no one can learn to will great insights, everyone can learn to explore possibilities. . . . Just as we teach paragraph and essay structures to develop certain discourse skills, we can give new primacy to modes of exploration which encourage the consistent inversion and evolution of the commonplace" (54-55). Perhaps we do not get creative essays from students because they do not think we expect them. Instead, they (and we) define "creative writing" as the writing of fiction or poetry, not expository prose, academic essays, or business documents. Whatever the form of writing, we need to encourage classroom discussions of students' Write Ideas. A teacher can ask Molly what made her think of that particular metaphor or invite Ben to tell the class what made him decide to use song lyrics throughout his essay. Students will then see that the teacher and their peers value innovation, and others can learn the kinds of thinking that promote creativity. Such discussion can take some mystery out of the writing process while still sharing in its excitement. And when marking papers, we must train ourselves to recognize and comment on creativity as readily as comma splices and to reward it appropriately.

Creatively thinking a way out in the move from prewriting to drafting is crucial to good writing. We should heed Perkins's warning that a writer can create without being very creative. Looking for a generative refocus, considering purpose and organization, and analyzing the audience can prompt creativity. Such concentrated effort may distinguish a good writer from a mediocre one. Good writers think harder and longer. Reconsidering how we make assignments, hold conferences, and evaluate papers may also prompt more innovative writing. Good teachers cultivate and reward creativity every chance they get.

The next time the Write Idea pops in your head, the light bulb glows, Erato delivers, try to identify the source of the "ah ha." It may indeed be more reasonable and explainable than mysterious and magical. When you see evidence of critical thinking leading to a creative way out in your students' drafts, ask them to describe their path to good ideas. Then let me know; I'm still curious.

Notes

[1] Although this definition was proposed in the early 1960s, it remains a "widely accepted and frequently cited" one in the field of creativity studies (Harrington 145).

[2] For further discussion of the connection between problem-finding and creativity in writing see Michael T. Moore, "The Relationship Between Originality of Essays and Variables in the Problem-Discovery Process: A Study of Creative and Noncreative Middle School Students," *Research in the Teaching of English* 19 (1985): 84-95; and Sarah Liggett, "Creativity and Non-Literary Writing: The Importance of Problem Finding," *Journal of Teaching Writing*, forthcoming.

[3] For additional reading on assignments that foster creativity, see the following: Robert Boice, "The Neglected Third Factor in Writing: Productivity," *College Composition and Communication* 36 (1985): 465-71; H. E. Dowling, Jr., "Imaginative Exposition: Teaching 'Creative' Non-Fiction Writing," *College Composition and Communication* 36 (1985): 454-64; Richard L. Graves, ed., "Part Three: Motivating Student Writing" in *Rhetoric and Composition: A Sourcebook for Teachers and Writers*, 3rd ed. (Portsmouth: Boynton, 1990) 109-61; and Marilyn M. Robitaille, "Using the Lesson Cycle in Teaching Composition: A Plan for Creativity," (ERIC: ED283145, 1987).

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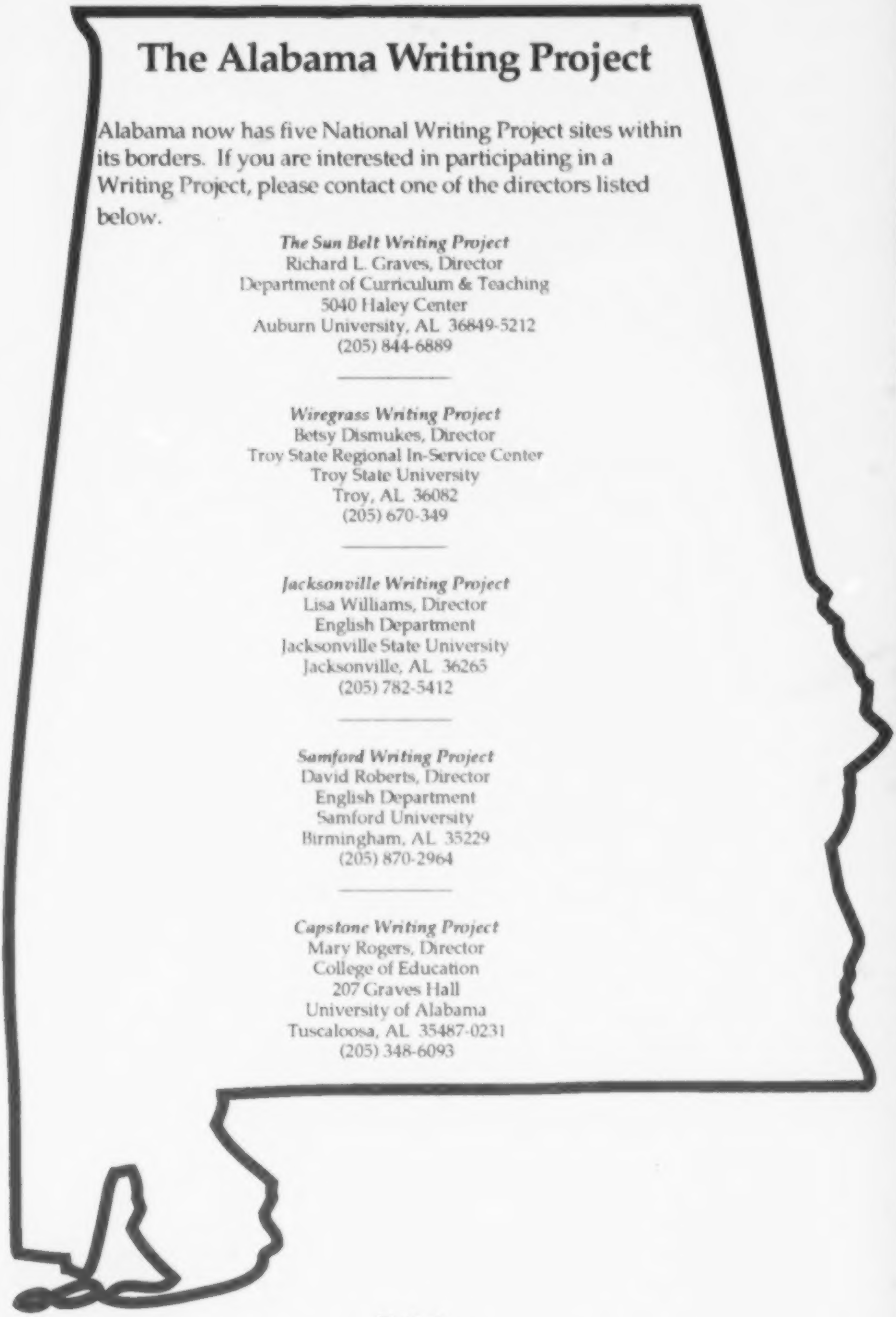

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Setting As Meaning: A Scenic Approach To Teaching *The Glass Menagerie*

Thomas P. Adler

Thomas P. Adler is a professor of English and Associate Dean of Liberal Arts at Purdue University, where he has taught drama since receiving his PhD from the University of Illinois in 1970. He recently published a monograph entitled A Streetcar Named Desire: The Moth and the Lantern, *and he is currently writing a critical study of American Drama, 1940-60.*

Although Tennessee Williams considered *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947) his "best play," *The Glass Menagerie* (1944) is certainly his most often anthologized and taught work, especially at the high school and introductory college level. As perhaps the richest of all his dramas in its kinesthetic elements, *Menagerie* is also the one that demands the most careful attention to stage directions and scenic design if it is to be properly understood. As teachers of dramatic literature, we often tell our students about the importance of imagining a play in the theatre of their mind, but in practice we probably spend much less time than we should discussing visual elements in class. Yet to ignore them in *The Glass Menagerie* likely results in misreading, and therefore mis-seeing, the work. As the theatre scholar and critic Robert Brustein usefully reminds us, "when the lights go up on a play, you are entering a designer's world, and it is the designer's images that implant themselves indelibly on the edges of your mind" (29). And one of the hallmarks of Williams as a pictorial dramatist is that he actually indicated much of the design plan as he wrote.

Fortunately, in adopting a scenic approach to teaching *Menagerie*, we have available both Williams's extensive directions within the text and his Production Notes (which appear in the New Directions edition but are not always reprinted in anthologies) as well as the drawings by Jo Mielziner, whose designs embodied Williams's original intention so well (125, 127). Williams's Notes developed the concept of "plastic theatre" as it applies to the play; Mielziner's design concept, through its use of transparent scrims, inaugurated what has come to be called "an age of gauze" in American theatre.

A line that appears about midway through Tom Wingfield's opening narration, "The play is memory" (23), not merely justifies but even necessitates both the plasticity and the gauziness. The narrative passages that frame the play's beginning and end and also occur at three other points (the start of Scene

Three, during Scene Five, and again at the opening of Scene Six) make *Menagerie* analogous structurally to a first person limited point of view novel. Perhaps Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* can provide a useful reference for many students. Williams's choice of such a structure insinuates strongly that his narrator Tom (like Fitzgerald's Nick Carraway) should be seen as the focal character; since the action all takes place within his mind, it is *his* play. The stage, in fact, becomes an image of the inside of his head, with the gauze scrims simulating the hazy, filtering process of memory. As Mielziner claims, "My use of translucent and transparent scenic interior walls was not just another trick. It was a true reflection of the contemporary playwright's interest in—and at times obsession with—the exploration of the inner man" (124).

Yet when students are asked, they hardly ever answer that Tom Wingfield is the main character, as the visual elements would seem to militate. Such a reaction, however, is completely understandable, since Tom certainly does not elicit as strong an emotional response as either his fragile sister Laura or his domineering mother Amanda. As Bertolt Brecht (to whom we will return later) has written, "A deeply ingrained habit induces the audience in the theatre to pick out the more emotional aspects of the characters and to ignore the rest" (quoted in Esslin 243). Yet once our probing leads students to recognize a correlation between the setting, the structure, and the way that memory works, they can usually see the logic of why Tom remembers: guilt over having deserted his dependent sister to answer the equally imperative call of self-definition and fulfillment. A question to keep in mind, then, is whether Tom's confessional, even compulsive, reliving of his past finally proves therapeutic for him. The answer, as we shall see, is closely allied to the final visual image in the play.

Along with establishing the memory structure of the play with its correlative image of the stage as the mind, the visual and verbal opening of *The Glass Menagerie* introduces another motif that can appropriately be developed with more advanced students. Loosely stated, it is the motif of art. It is the relationship between the mind or creative imagination and the theatre as a place of illusion. All three of the central figures in the play depend on crutches to help them escape the world of reality. Tom has the poems he writes on shoebox lids, his dreams of adventure in the merchant marines, and his incessant moviegoing. Amanda, to buoy up her denial of Laura's physical disability and support her dreams for her daughter's normality, has her women's romance magazines as well as her nostalgia for exaggeratedly large numbers of gentlemen callers in Blue Mountain—a retreat into the past that considerably circumscribes both her present and her daughter's future. Laura has her phonograph records and her glass animals. The characters inhabit, indeed, a house of illusion.

In his opening lines, Tom comments on the nature of theatrical illusion, and the difference between the traditional realistic drama and the kind of play which the audience at *Menagerie* can expect to see. Admitting he has "tricks in [his] pocket . . . things up [his] sleeve," he distinguishes himself from "the stage magician [who] gives you illusion that has the appearance of truth," claiming instead that he will "give [us] truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion" (22). Rather than ask the audience to suspend disbelief and accept the theatrical illusion as the reality, to make believe that we are not making believe, here the narrator emphasizes that the audience will be kept aware they are in an auditorium watching a play, with all of the stage conventions not only employed but even called attention to deliberately. This concern that the audience be aware that the play is an illusion links directly to Williams's assertion in the Production Notes that in art it is not the "photographic likeness" that matters most, since "unconventional techniques" ideally result in "a closer approach to the truth."

> When a play employs unconventional techniques, it is not, or certainly shouldn't be, trying to escape its responsibility of dealing with reality, or interpreting experience, but is actually or should be attempting to find a closer approach, a more penetrating and vivid expression of things as they are. (7)

Without question, the most "unconventional" nonrealistic device Williams employs in *Glass Menagerie* is the projection of images and legends upon a screen. This point is duly underlined by the fact that no professional production of the play until its fourth New York revival in 1983 (earlier ones occurred in 1956, 1965, and 1975) was faithful to William's text in this regard. The text calls for the flashing of two dozen legends or phrases and another dozen and a half pictures or images onto the living room wall of the set. If Williams's use of lighting and music owe much to the cinema—as Roger Boxhill, among others, has well documented (68)—the screen device clearly is an inheritance from Brecht. In his Notes, Williams justifies the use of the legends and images as a means of helping the audience zero-in on the essence of each scene rather than suffer any disorientation:

> In an episodic play, such as this, the basic structure or narrative line may be obscured from the audience; the effect may seem fragmentary rather than architectural. . . . The legend or image . . . allow[s] the primary point to be made more simply and lightly than if the entire responsibility were on the spoken lines. (8)

Two questions need to be asked of students: first, if they were producing or directing *Menagerie*, would they retain the screen device and, if so, why? And second, precisely how do some of the more important of these legends and images function? Reasons other than Williams's ostensible one can easily be advanced to justify maintaining the technique in production. For one thing, since *Menagerie* is a memory play, the screen device might be seen as an attempt to replicate the way that the mind works by association, with a single word or image enough to call up an episode from the past. For another, the device—and here Brecht serves as the model—distracts the audience, interrupting the process of identification by pulling them back from the characters and breaking a too strong emotional attachment. It is almost as if Williams were warning us not to over-sentimentalize the characters, for to do that would deflect us from the play's central meaning. (In fact, if you ask students to ignore the framing technique of the narrator and the visual component of the legends and images, they are able almost immediately to recognize what remains as a fairly predictable, soap opera-like story. This stripping down will help make them appreciate the necessity for paying adequate attention to these elements, for not to do so means that we end up discussing or producing a play other than the one Williams took such care in writing.)

Some of the legends and images are perfectly straightforward and hardly demand mention. Others, such as the oxymoronic "Blue Roses"—with its connotations of a chilling of love or passion—or the glamour magazine cover—with its comment on how the romantic imagination, fueled by Hollywood escapism, can become a curse—warrant greater attention. Still others (and I usually center on two of them with my own students) create a whole web of associations that can contribute to a coherent reading of the play.

At the beginning of Scene Five, for example, the legend on the screen proclaims, "Annunciation" (56). This word links the Angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary that she was chosen to be the mother of God with Tom's announcement to Amanda that he has invited Jim O'Connor from the shoe warehouse to come calling for dinner the next night. Jim, though he visits on a Friday (the day Christ achieved humankind's redemption upon the cross), does not save Laura, figuratively failing to die for her. The secular communion of the evening meal is broken, with Laura retreating ill to the living room, though Jim does join her afterwards, carrying a lighted candelabrum—remnant from a fire at the Church of the Heavenly Rest—and, in a distinct reference to the Eucharist, offering her a glass of wine (88). (Roger Stein has detailed the play's religious iconography well [141-53], even if his conclusion that Williams is here presenting a God-abandoned world might be strained.)

Students need particularly to keep the candlelight and the notion of Jim as false saviour in mind as they explore the legend, "A souvenir" (106), that underlines the climactic moment in Scene Seven. In fact, three souvenirs appear in this scene. The first is the program from the high school production of *The Pirates of Penzance* which Laura had been too timid to ask Jim to sign. He now autographs it for her "with a flourish" (96). The second souvenir is the glass unicorn which falls from the table and breaks while Jim and Laura are dancing and which Laura presses into Jim's hand when he leaves (108). Jim, with his Dale Carnegie mentality, attempts to persuade Laura to put the best face on this accident: the unicorn will now, without its horn, be no different from the other animals in the collection and therefore will be less freakish, in the same way that Jim would argue Laura will now be more like, comfortably the same as, other girls through this meeting between them that has brought her out of her shell. Yet the unicorn and the breaking of its horn hold an underlying sexual connotation, which links it with the third—and probably most important—souvenir: the kiss.

It is understandable that Jim's kissing her as they dance creates "a bright, dazed look" (106) on Laura's face, for the man she knew up to that time only in her dreams has now become a reality. This moment serves as Laura's initiation into physical sexuality. But when Jim cruelly reveals his engagement, she is shattered, for the reality has not measured up to the dream. Perhaps it is not better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all, for nothing in the text points to Laura's having any hope of ever experiencing such physical love again. As a character in Maxine Kumin's novel, *The Designated Heir*, laments: "I wish it had never happened. . . . It's because a taste of happiness is hard to bear" (35).

The candle imagery becomes a key for students' understanding of Laura's fate, of her probable inability to recover from this trauma. Early in their conversation, Jim "smile[s] at Laura with a warmth and charm which lights her inwardly with altar candles" (97). Later, when Laura discovers that Jim's love is already reserved for someone else, "The holy candles on the altar of Laura's face have been snuffed out. There is a look of almost infinite desolation" (108).

A final extinguishing of candles occurs at *Menagerie*'s close, this time in response to the pleas of her brother Tom. In his ending narrative frame, Tom reveals that he has been haunted by Laura's memory after his escape from the apartment, reminded of her by "a familiar bit of music," "a piece of transparent glass," perfume "bottles in delicate colors, like bits of a shattered rainbow" (115). To escape the ghostly, metaphoric touch of her hand on his shoulder, he has turned to other escapes, "anything that can blow [her] candles out" (115) and so release him.

When, finally, Laura "blows the candle out," it appears that his confessional act of remembering has been therapeutic, that she has forgiven him for his desertion of her. His world apparently opens up, allowing for a commitment to a wider vocation than family responsibility, while hers closes in upon her, emotionally, psychologically, even sexually, for the extinguished candle, like the broken horn of the unicorn, too, is phallic. As Tom begs his sister to "blow out your candles," Williams perhaps intends that we be reminded of an earlier dramatic command for darkness to overtake light. When Shakespeare's Othello goes to Desdemona's bedchamber to smother her, he orders himself, "Put out the light, and then put out the light" (V.ii.7). The first is the physical light that he carries, the second is the light that is Desdemona's radiant nature. The extinguishing of Laura's light, as of Desdemona's, means that she will remain forever virginal, unfulfilled—the heavy price paid so that Williams's burgeoning writer / narrator can grow and flourish.

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This double issue of *Alabama English* combines articles that would have been published in the Spring and Fall 1992 issues. This is the only issue of *Alabama English* you will receive in 1992. You will not receive a separate Fall issue.

Interdisciplinary Teaching

Sue Powell and Gloria Solomon
Pinson Elementary School

At Pinson Elementary School, with an enrollment of nearly 1400, the process approach to writing instruction has been implemented into the curriculum and refined over the past five years. But only recently did we discover that interdisciplinary teaching goes a step beyond the writing workshop and even learning logs in giving substance to the curriculum. Interdisciplinary teaching enhances curriculum by making it whole and also by developing a community of learners. This article discusses interdisciplinary teaching at Pinson Elementary School.

In *What's Whole in Whole Language*, Ken Goodman addresses interdisciplinary teaching organized around broad conceptual themes.

> Whole language teachers organize the whole of or a large part of the curriculum around topics or themes: What are the risks of nuclear war? Is water pollution a danger in our community? . . . They can be science units, social science units, literature units, or units that integrate all three, as well as the arts, humanities, and even physical education. A unit provides a focal point for inquiry, for use of language, for cognitive development. It involves pupils in planning, and gives them choices of authentic, relevant activities within productive studies. (31)

The teachers at Pinson agreed with Goodman's view of whole language, but this discussion was all just theory until we constructed our own meaning through special problems that begged for solutions.

Some of our teachers began to complain that they had too much to teach and not enough time. Our curriculum had become a series of add-ons with no wholeness and little substance. A few of our best teachers were telling us they didn't think they could continue teaching beyond the month or the year. The stress was intense. At this point, we weren't looking for new teaching and learning approaches. We just needed to find a way to teach more in less time. We had to find a way to tie the curriculum all together. The answer to our problems came in the form of interdisciplinary teaching. Here was a way to make the entire curriculum whole—to involve writing and reading across the curriculum, or better still, to make writing and reading the keys to teaching everything else. At the same time, interdisciplinary teaching became a way to train all the teachers at one time by sharing talents, resources, and strategies.

On occasion, however, some teachers in referring to their "interdisciplinary unit" seemed to have a vastly different concept of interdisciplinary teaching than their colleagues in other classrooms. To clarify the meaning that encompasses our vision, we include the following definitions from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development's *Interdisciplinary Curriculum: Design and Implementation*, edited by Heidi Hayes Jacobs.

- Discipline Field: A specific body of teachable knowledge with its own background of education, training, procedures, methods, and content areas. (7, cited from Piaget)
- Interdisciplinary: A knowledge view and curriculum approach that consciously applies methodology and language from more than one discipline to examine a central theme, issue, problem, topic, or experience. (8)

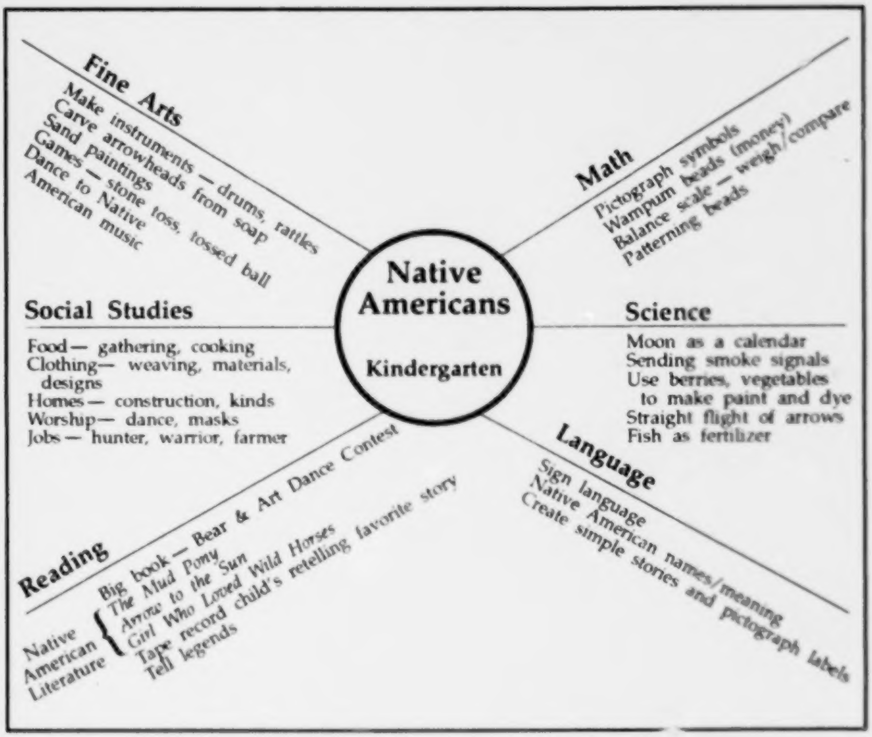
Jacobs goes on to say:

> In contrast to a discipline-field based view of knowledge, interdisciplinary does not stress delineations but linkages. Meeth notes that the emphasis is on deliberately identifying the relationship between disciplines. It is a holistic approach with a tradition in Western thought that comes from Plato's ideal of unity as the highest good in all things. Interdisciplinarity nutures a different perspective with focus on themes and problems of life experience. (8)

Over the summer our nine second-grade teachers generated a long list of thematic units. They brainstormed ideas for activities in the major subject areas making sure skills and processes were adequately integrated. When we told the eight third-grade teachers about it, they wanted to do the same thing, and they added the idea of using a tableaux to present what was learned. In the planning stage, the two of us, the mentor teacher and the principal, became members of the team. We suggested the idea of focusing on a unified theme schoolwide to enhance learning across grade levels. Theme studies that involve an entire school give children numerous opportunities to share information and see similarities or relationships in each other's studies (Gonser 10). A natural choice is Native Americans, which is recommended in the Alabama Course of Studies for each grade level. Each grade level would have a different focus. The students would learn history, geography, language, and customs of all kinds and throughout the unit would write and read widely.

The kindergarten teachers jumped at the idea. The first-grade teachers were interested although they had reservations, but the fourth- and fifth-grade teachers had strong objections later expressed in our survey. Had we known about the objections at the inception of the program, we might have considered exempting the fourth and fifth grades. These teachers have to give the standardized achievement tests, and this plan of schoolwide themes as well as the idea of interdisciplinary teaching with writing across the curriculum were viewed as a hindrance to the acquisition of skills that would be tested in April rather than an opportunity to build a rich, relevant, and exciting curriculum for our students.

When our eight kindergarten teachers, 10 first-grade, nine second-grade, and eight teachers on each of the other grade levels came together to plan their Native American unit shortly before Thanksgiving, it was soon evident to everyone that their units had much greater depth and breadth than anything attempted before schoolwide. Page 55 shows an example


Fine Arts
Make instruments — drums, rattles
Carve arrowheads from soap
Sand paintings
Games — stone toss, tossed ball
Dance to Native American music
Math
Pictograph symbols
Wampum beads (money)
Balance scale — weigh/compare
Patterning beads
Native Americans
Kindergarten
Social Studies
Food — gathering, cooking
Clothing — weaving, materials, designs
Homes — construction, kinds
Worship — dance, masks
Jobs — hunter, warrior, farmer
Science
Moon as a calendar
Sending smoke signals
Use berries, vegetables to make paint and dye
Straight flight of arrows
Fish as fertilizer
Reading
Big book — Bear & Art Dance Contest
Native American Literature
The Mud Pony
Arrow to the Sun
Girl Who Loved Wild Horses
Tape record child's retelling favorite story
Tell legends
Language
Sign language
Native American names/meaning
Create simple stories and pictograph labels

The unit on Native Americans designed for kindergarten students brings together math, science, language, reading, social studies, and fine arts activities.

of the kindergarten North American thematic plan.

For this event and two others scheduled later in the school year, all grade levels participated in planning an interdisciplinary unit, which included all the subject areas where they fit together naturally. At the conclusion of the grade level planning for the Native American unit, each grade shared its plan with the other grades. The culminating event was a tableaux, a museum-like exhibit where students in every grade could enjoy displays featuring live models in costumes, artwork, music, crafts, writing, and literature in the aesthetically pleasing environment of one of our media centers. The displays were videotaped by a core of student technicians for later viewing over KPEP-TV Channel 4, our closed circuit television station. In this way the displays could be viewed as often as we desired.

The interdisciplinary focus was again used at Christmas for an enriching unit about holiday customs around the world. A final interdisciplinary unit is in the offing for our school's salute to Spain during the Festival of Arts. We chose these units because they stem from the Pinson curriculum and hold high interest among both teachers and students.

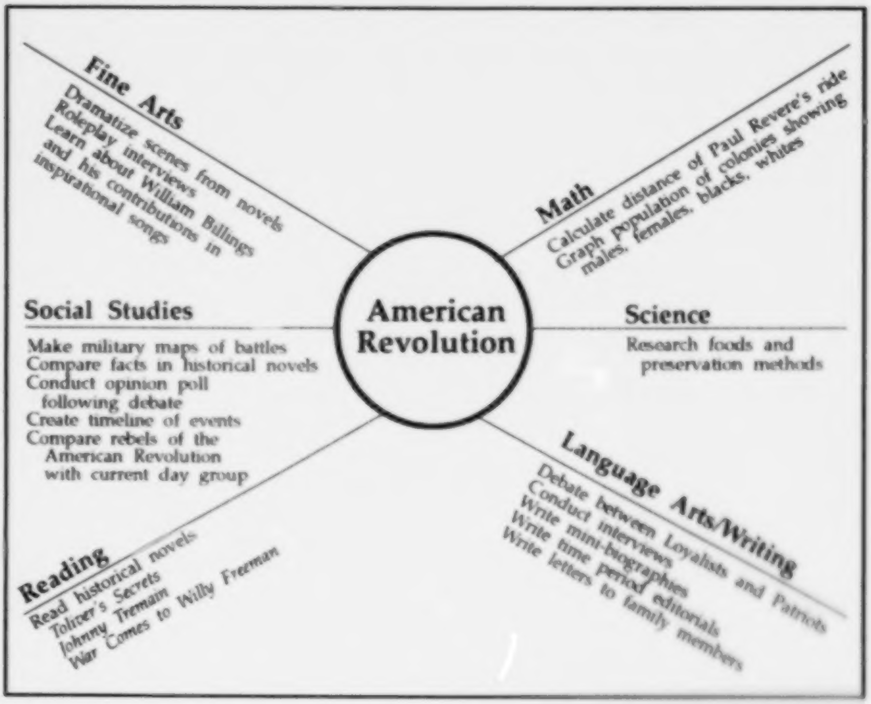
What was it about integrated teaching that made it so appealing? We have found teaching through themes allows us to integrate learning and allows children to explore a particular topic in depth (Thompson 9). Students were able to see the relationship of ideas and subjects, and their understanding of subject matter deepened. Cooperative learning, where students experience working with others to solve problems and complete assignments or projects, is an effective vehicle to accomplish the goals while developing a respect for self and others (*Methods*). Interdisciplinary teaching provides a foundation and basis for students to read about and study issues through multiple resources—from all vantage points (Pederson 5). D. N. Perkins writes about the need to make the curriculum more meaningful by making connections within and across subject matter. James Beane describes the integrated curriculum as having unity and meaning (9). There are no boundaries to limit our access to broader meanings as there are in the traditional curriculum with its "endless array of facts and skills that are unconnected, fragmented and disjointed."

Another feature to recommend the integrated curriculum is that it is knowledge-rich rather than superficial. Powerful broad conceptual themes call for in-depth study and the use of important concepts (Beane). Gordon F. Vars points to the challenge and imperative to design curricula that "simultaneously take into account solid subject matter, the needs of the learner and society's problems" (15). Interdisciplinary teaching fits the prescription.

The key to integration is teacher collaboration, which takes "time, creativity, and flexibility" (Aschbacher 17). Teachers may use textbooks as one resource but are more likely to put heavy emphasis on newspaper articles, novels, and writing by students. Some teachers team-teach their classes in multi-hour time blocks.

Some of the most successful and effective themes for integrated learning that teachers at Pinson Elementary School have used have been developed around children's writing and literature. As shown on page 57, a unit about the American Revolution includes the reading of historical novels about the period and the writing of mini-biographies, editorials, and letters along with activities traditionally classified as math, science, social studies, and fine arts. This unit begins with a broad theme and is supported by literature. Another unit, shown on page 58, focuses on interdisciplinary activites associated with reading Lynn Cherry's *The Great Kapok Tree*. Disciplines that have traditionally been taught separately from each other are unified in the study of a literature selection. In this unit, concepts, skills, and processes are developed around the story. Interdisciplinary units can be developed from the curriculum area or from the literature selection. We found that both approaches achieve the same objectives.

Although interdisciplinary teaching holds great promise for enriching and broadening students' opportunities to develop language arts skills through authentic, holistic activities, this approach is not without its drawbacks.


Fine Arts
Dramatize scenes from novels
Roleplay interviews
Learn about William Billings and his contributions in inspirational songs
Math
Calculate distance of Paul Revere's ride
Graph population of colonies showing males, females, blacks, whites
Social Studies
Make military maps of battles
Compare facts in historical novels
Conduct opinion poll following debate
Create timeline of events
Compare rebels of the American Revolution with current day group
American Revolution
Science
Research foods and preservation methods
Reading
Read historical novels
Toliver's Secrets
Johnny Tremain
War Comes to Willy Freeman
Language Arts/Writing
Debate between Loyalists and Patriots
Conduct interviews
Write mini-biographies
Write time period editorials
Write letters to family members

The unit on the American Revolution brings together learning in seemingly diverse disciplines.

Like the process approach to writing instruction, the movement toward the use of interdisciplinary teaching has to be spurred by teachers if it is to take root. Like their students, many teachers move effortlessly from one developmental stage to another, unless blocked by administrators who impose innovations. Teachers at Pinson Elementary are at various places on the continuum in their acceptance and readiness to integrate their classroom instructional program. When surveyed, grade-level teachers and students listed an equal number of benefits and limitations.

The limitations that were registered on grade-level compilations were:

- "Not all units are easily adapted to interdisciplinary teaching."
- "Not enough time to consolidate ideas."
- "Lack of materials and resources at grade level."

A few teachers, at least, did not see interdisciplinary teaching as an opportunity to expand learning for students or for themselves. These concerns were noted by fifth-grade teachers:

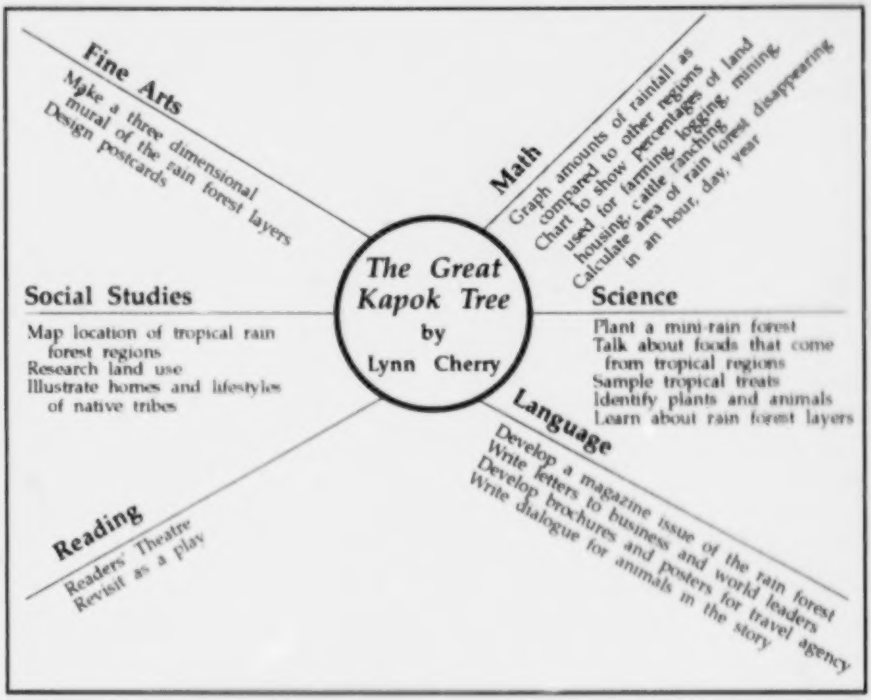
- "Teaching differences should be respected, and they have not been with these interdisciplinary units. It is not good for morale to forcibly mandate that certain things should be taught at certain times. I resent being told what to do. It is counterproductive for a whole school or a whole unit to do the same thing at the same time. It also stifles individual teaching styles as well as teaching creativity."

- "It is the opposite of academic freedom."

- "The units should not be forced on us." Yet, this same group of teachers said of the benefits, "It is neat to see all the ideas you can get that carry the theme throughout the other subjects."

- "I am jumping around in the textbook like never before. Sometimes this can confuse students, but the sharing of ideas among teachers is making it possible to present a greater variety of activities for students."

A few other teachers seem to be concerned about textbook coverage of skills and worry that skills cannot be taught or learned if they are not taught separately.


The Great Kapok Tree
by
Lynn Cherry
Fine Arts
Make a three dimensional mural of the rain forest layers
Design postcards
Math
Graph amounts of rainfall as compared to other regions
Chart to show percentages of land used for farming, logging, mining, housing, cattle ranching
Calculate area of rain forest disappearing in an hour, day, year
Social Studies
Map location of tropical rain forest regions
Research land use
Illustrate homes and lifestyles of native tribes
Science
Plant a mini-rain forest
Talk about foods that come from tropical regions
Sample tropical treats
Identify plants and animals
Learn about rain forest layers
Reading
Readers' Theatre
Revisit as a play
Language
Develop a magazine issue of the rain forest
Write letters to business and world leaders
Develop brochures and posters for travel agency
Write dialogue for animals in the story

The unit on *The Great Kapok Tree* uses a literary selection to suggest learning activities in a variety of disciplines.

Their comments are as follows: "Curriculum requirements are so extensive you often cannot spend the time you need on an interdisciplinary unit." We infer from these comments that some teachers may think interdisciplinary teaching is just a frill that teachers do after they have done what is required.

One of our 10 first-grade teachers filling out an individual response form apart from the grade-level compilation said interdisciplinary teaching was "overstimulating," and "November is too early in the year for an intense unit." This same teacher said, too, that it is difficult to coordinate so many teachers and so many plans.

We were pleased to see that benefits were also pointed out. Many of the teachers who enumerated benefits submitted their thoughts on compiled lists. (We couldn't help but think those were the teachers who work together most harmoniously and productively.) On each grade level the benefits enumerated were similar. Teachers said:

- "Interdisciplinary teaching made learning more meaningful."
- "Learners were more motivated."
- "Instruction made more sense to children because the curriculum fit together better."

An important benefit was that the curriculum seemed "whole" and students were able to construct meaningful connections among the subjects. According to the teachers, this wholeness was evidenced by comments children often made when they saw meaningful connections: "Oh, we read about this yesterday in social studies." Teachers also liked the facts that children were more frequently exposed to hands-on activities; it was easier to connect arts and crafts; and, overall, the students thought the units were fun. Teachers appreciated how much easier it was to give students material at their own level yet make them feel like part of the group. This emphasis on the individual and the group was particularly important for special education resource teachers. Many teachers found the multi-presentation through various media, such as the closed circuit television, a good reinforcement. Among other benefits, teachers cited greater parental enthusiasm, the ease with which other curriculum areas could be connected, the reduction of planning time when teachers plan together, and the fact that more material could be covered by teaching skills in interesting connective contexts. Teachers liked sharing ideas and resources and several pointed to the feeling of unity on grade level. Teachers at one or more grade levels reported having more "quality time with students." Many teachers viewed interdisciplinary teaching as a good way to view students' understanding through different modes of performance.

And what did the children say? Most of the students in second and fifth grades surveyed said what second-grader Chris Hannah said, "I like the challenge. It's fun even though we are learning," or what Kelly McGill in fifth grade said, "I like studying about the Constitution and Inventors. I learned that Benjamin Franklin was involved with the Constitution, and he was also an inventor." Jonathan Eshghi's comment is also representative of many other children's responses to experiencing the more multi-sensory approach and the cooperative learning groups more frequently used in interdisciplinary units: "I really like the way you do this because we do not use our books all the time. Instead we get to talk about inventors and the Constitution, and I learn better this way."

And what did we, the mentor teacher and the administrator, think? We saw the principles of writing across the curriculum used to a greater extent than ever before. We saw more children's literature ordered for classroom library programs. Subject areas fit together into more meaningful wholes. Teachers who routinely assigned the textbook as the mainstay of their instructional program were using more hands-on activities and providing for more active student participation. More teachers had the opportunity to see the value of instruction in both process and product as essential to learning for life and quality outcomes. More critical thinking was evident as in-depth learning was taking place. More authentic experiences were provided: students were preparing scripts for presentation on KPEP, the closed circuit television, or writing to our sister Native American School in Fort Totten, North Dakota, rather than just doing writing exercises from the end of the textbook chapter.

True, along with the instructional benefits, we encountered some administrative problems. We had asked the teachers to develop a Native American unit to be taught any time they chose from Columbus Day to Thanksgiving. A few teachers misconstrued "any time they chose" to be the entire time period, and that was too long, as some teachers pointed out. Teachers unused to teaming with others or to being adaptable or flexible were stressed to the breaking point, even perceiving the idea as an infringement of academic freedom, but overall the majority showed by their comments surprise and delight to see greater learning achieved. Several who pinpointed the fact that the school could not provide adequate materials for all grades at the same time failed to see that reading books over KPEP, for example, allowed one book to be heard by all the children on campus at the same time.

What will we do differently in the future? We will ask the school to select their own schoolwide themes. We will use videotaped models to help teachers formulate a vision in deciding when and how to make the instructional program more whole. Actually, teachers have had no trouble doing that at Christmas or during our city's salute to various countries. But in the past that enrichment has been furnished by only a few teachers in every school, including ours. We want these enriching opportunities to be furnished to all of our children, not just the lucky few.

In the future we will provide ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers through in-service workshops and observations of others who have effectively put interdisciplinary teaching into operation.

Some of the greatest benefits we see are that interdisciplinary teaching helps teachers achieve accountability by eliminating gaps. This can more easily be accomplished by fitting more bits and pieces of subject matter required by the Alabama Course of Studies into a meaningful, holistic instructional program that meets the needs of the children instead of the other way around.

All in all, interdisciplinary teaching has helped our school realize its goals for immersing students in a more literate environment and for celebrating learning by teaching lessons that last.

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1990: The Beginning of a New Decade

Gene Geiger

The year 1990 was a very productive one for writers from Alabama. A casual glance at the bibliography that follows will show the diversity of their efforts. There were works of fiction (some good, some not so good), poetry, nonfiction (including some prize winners), and juvenile literature (a mixed bag). While not listed, two interesting plays, *Wedges* and *Waterin' Hole*, were written by Hubert Grissom, Jr. Both were staged in Birmingham, and one was later presented off-Broadway in New York.

Two new Alabama novelists made their debuts in 1990. Elizabeth Dewberry Vaughn's *Many Things Have Happened Since He Died and Here Are the Highlights* and Dennis McFarland's *The Music Room* were published. Vaughn, formerly on the faculty at Emory University in Atlanta, now resides in Birmingham. McFarland, who grew up in Mobile, teaches creative writing at Emerson College in Boston. Although both of the novels were praised by the critics, perhaps McFarland's book received the greater praise. McFarland was the subject of a lengthy article in the *Washington Post*, and his novel was listed as one of the best of the year by *Publishers Weekly*. Both novelists are currently at work on their second books.

Not only were novels by new writers published during 1990, but the established Alabama novelists were also active. The year saw the arrival of Robert Reeves's long-awaited sequel to *Doubting Thomas* with the publication of *Peeping Thomas*. Unfortunately, this effort was not as satisfying as its predecessor. Gustav Hasford continued his interpretation of the Vietnam War with his second novel, *The Phantom Blooper*. His first novel, *Short Timers*, was produced as a motion picture under the title *Full Metal Jacket*. Other writers with new books appearing at the start of a new decade include Phillip Q. Morris, Gregory Benford, Jon Breen, Robert McCammon, and Thomas H. Cook, to name just a few.

In 1990 many new nonfiction works appeared. Edward O. Wilson, Harvard University professor and Birmingham native, continued his work on behavior and social organization with the publication of *The Ants*. The photographs used throughout the book won an award. A. D. Livingston, a former student of Hudson Strode, published an interesting cookbook, as did Jean Voltz. Departing from his usual mystery novel, Thomas H. Cook turned to real crime for his new book, *Early Graves*. Similar to Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*, the book is a study of the cruel death of a young girl in Northeastern Alabama.

Sports! Not only did Bo Jackson publish his autobiography, *Bo Knows Bo,* but four other books about him appeared as well. Most of these, however, were written for children. Other sports personalities with biographies appearing during 1990 include Jesse Owen, Joe Louis, and Willie Mays.

What can we look forward to from Alabama writers? What new novels can we expect to find in bookstores? Since Vicki Covington is at work on a new novel, tentatively titled *Warrior Road,* and her husband, Dennis, is the author of a young adult novel, *Lizard* (see the review in this issue), we can expect to read more from this Birmingham couple. In addition, Roy Hoffman, the Mobile writer known for *Almost Family,* has completed his second novel, *Last Flight Home*. The publication date of this new work is unknown. What new works can be expected from other Mobilians—Dennis McFarland, Winston Groom, and Geoffrey Norman? When will the new Norman mystery novel appear, featuring the two characters found in *Sweetwater Ranch*? Other Alabamians with new works forthcoming include Celestine Sibley (*Ah, Sweet Mystery*), Anne Nall Stallworth (*Little Kingdoms*), W. E. B. Griffin (*Line of Fire*), Robert Reeves (*Thomas Solves the Mystery of Life*), and Robert McCammon (*Boy's Life*).

What about nonfiction? What new works can we expect from Wayne Flynt, author of *Poor But Proud*? What about David Harrell, author of *Oral Roberts, An American Life*? Will this decade see the publication of *A Biographical Guide to Alabama Literature,* edited by Bert Hitchcock and Elaine Hughes? What new works can be expected from Fred Hobson and Jefferson Humphries?

What new poet will appear? We know Andrew Hudgins has a new volume of poems—*The Never-Ending*. Will Rodney Jones and Thomas Rabbitt publish new works? As for drama, will Brad Bailey and Huburt Grissom continue to contribute new works in this field?

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Response

Where Has Cultural Literacy Gone?

The following article is a response to William C. Taylor's "Where Has Cultural Literacy Gone?" published in our Spring 1991 issue. In this article, Anne G. Johnson responds not only to Taylor but also to the other discussants.

The Importance of Vocabulary Study

Anne G. Johnson
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The Spring 1991 issue of *Alabama English* renewed my sense of the Alabama English teacher's ever inquiring mind, dedication, and pursuit of what is best for Alabama students. The comment and response section, with its focus on questions related to the choice of reading material for k-12, was of special interest to all professionals involved in the omnipresent troubling discussion of the nature of the canon and cultural literacy. The issues raised whenever a choice of literature must be made may never be resolved to everyone's satisfaction; but I was struck by the moderate "both-and" rather than a strident "either-or" approach as proponents of classic versus non-traditional works argued for the quality of the work *and* the experience, a testimony to lively concern rather than intellectual academic intransigence.

It is in this same spirit of compromise and accommodation that I would like to prolong the discussion in the area of vocabulary as such. One of the respondents commented that senior high students have ". . . inadequate reading skills. They stumble over ordinary words. . . . [T]hey've heard all the words before on television, but they've not read them and thus don't recognize them in print" (Williams 36). Since this is applicable to the "ordinary," how much more concern must there be over their acquaintance with words they never hear or else filter out? Certainly at all levels, limited vocabularies frustrate students as well as teachers desiring to help them with their writing and reading. As glibly as the world may seem at times to project a future not dependent on verbal skills, many of us feel certain that the present (and probably the future also) demands abilities young people aren't gaining.

The will to tackle this deficit may be getting lost in the broader problems related to language acquisition and use. At present there is no consensus on the larger questions of whether mind generates language behavior or whether our language, both structure and lexicon, shapes our thoughts. Since the concomitant issues have been viewed variously through the ages by thinkers concerned with the "naming of things," surely we would be unwise at this point to insist that either philosophical stance totally guide our pedagogical position. If we try to put the opposing views in two columns with Plato, Augustine, Descartes, Kant, Chomsky on one side and Aristotle, Aquinas, Locke, Sapir and Whorf on the other, what strange bedfellows we have anyway. Moreover, when we look at the two angles of vision from our own experience, we are not convinced one side will ever be validated over the other—or that validation matters.

Sometimes an obvious need seems to dictate an individual's gaining a word. Once, reading Sylvia Ashton-Warner's *Spinster,* I remember being persuaded anew of how powerful a motivation there is in the learning process if the child is emotionally gripped by a word's importance. Ashton-Warner tells of fruitless attempts to teach New Zealand children to read until she realizes that they do not forget "knife" and "blood" and "policeman" when they see these words which identify the terror in their daily lives. On the other hand, sometimes meeting a new word seems to make it possible for students to formulate thoughts they had not previously had. But, as the philosophical debate continues, do we wait in the wings—sighing over those aspects of our culture that numb the latent human function of thinking or over the paucity of words which limits expression in student speech and writing? No, we can't play Prince Hamlet even if we are undecided about how the mind works.

Although I cannot subscribe to the extreme view of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis that we are totally at the mercy of our native culture's language, I find myself inclined to the reasonableness of this position. Without an understanding of what words normally denote in our society, we cannot comprehend what we read and hear. Disturbing examples confront me frequently. Sometimes after a discussion of certain works of literature, it seems as if students relate to what I and other class members are saying; but then their written comments reveal that hearing has occurred without understanding. It is certainly demoralizing to read a test answer stating that "Jew day old Christian" concepts underlie *Doctor Faustus* when we have been using the term "Judeo-Christian." (Did the student think I was talking about a Saul-on-the-road-to-Damascus experience or about something like day-old bread?) Almost as appalling were a comment on Chaucer's pilgrims going to Canterbury for "pennants" and a description of Milton's Eve succumbing to the Tempter as "so coming."

These are not just rare humorous examples of folk etymologies; every teacher is familiar with the inability to differentiate homophones and with the vacuum into which explanations fall, lost in a Dantesque whirlwind. For several years I have become increasingly aware of a steady erosion in college students' knowledge of words necessary for functioning in the world. Just this past spring, for example, diagnostic tests revealed many intelligent juniors and seniors who could not define words such as these: "indict," "stipend," "candid," "brevity," "bigotry," "condone," "covert," "eugenics," "tacit," and on and on. The real danger here is that people's thoughts can be warped, confused, or blocked because they don't know the words the way they are commonly used. Because words do not have inherent connections with their referents, they must be known by the general associations usually assigned by the speaking and writing community.

To whatever extent we accept that we are culturally coded, we can't "break" the codes without knowing them ("break" being used in both senses: to "unravel the cryptogram" and "destroy or overcome"). Moreover, studies seem to have shown that memory as well as perception can only be assured by identification with appropriate tags, words.

Nonetheless, as much as we may be lured by linguistic determinism, something of our Judeo-Christian (how could I have done without these words?) orientation honors the directing power of an inner self, the force of will to put into motion an innate language acquisition faculty—in short, a species-specific biological basis which has to be inspired as well as trained.

How then do we respond to these dichotomies? We may become immobilized in a position because we assume the children must first feel a need to know a word (or history fact, or math formula) as a motivating factor in their learning process. But while we wait for them to want / need the word, their chances of acquiring verbal skills, enlarging their world, facilitating their memory are passing. Yet, wouldn't we be foolish to assume that vocabulary lists of erudite, polysyllabic items will automatically metamorphose our halting primer writers into deep thinkers? Thus, we could find ourselves paralyzed by the age-old nature / nurture controversies, stymied when we most need to act.

Despite the problems with what meaning is and how we know meaning, we must feel the urgency to get the student on the wheel and keep the wheel turning—to inspire thinking which demands words and to supply words for cogent, clear thinking, to take advantage of that basic principle of learning whereby something new grows from the existing old. For a long time, psychologists and language experts have reminded us that defining a word, abstracting, is moving from the known to the unknown to the known. To initiate the process, it may be that, as one of the respondents states in her reference to Rosenblatt's transactional theory, "it does not really matter what the work is" (Culp 38). The students, their ages, grades, and interests may be the salient characteristics for consideration. But, to keep the process going, it matters very much that learners read works whose vocabulary is a challenge. Perhaps we have too long denigrated students by letting what they know dictate what they read rather than by insisting that what they read can dictate what they will know. If the will can activate the mind as many psychologists insist, is the will what we must heed? Can "will" be read "teacher" or "parent"?

Heads may be nodding in agreement or disagreement with the questions raised and the premises expressed here as each position respectively is valorized. Nonetheless, the bottom line is what shall we do? The answer is do something! When nutrition authorities vacillate on questions of what foods are best for us, we don't quit eating. We try to cover our bases and take some of many food groups. Or, like the ever wise Athenians, we build an altar to an unknown god. We try and try and try again, looking for what will be successful with a given group of students. We may have to forego positive assurances of what is theoretically sound and function like the minister who, when challenged by a dismayed parishioner on whether he really believed in infant baptism, replied, "Well, I've seen it!"

I have worked in various ways myself: with stress on roots and prefixes, or on guessing from these and context clues; in study of the myriad processes by which words come into existence and by which they change phonologically and semantically; through playing word games; and of course—first and foremost—through reading. Mythology, the Bible, history—all material which provides the general frame of reference is mandatory. The renewed stress in learning theory on whole language approaches certainly considers what teachers have probably always known: that all language skills are interdependent and none can be acquired in isolation. There was a time when most children who stayed in school learned no matter how unwise the methodology, but that time seems to be running out (I can remember over 20 years ago raising a polite voice against my own four having three different language teachers in elementary school: one for spelling, one for reading, and one for "English"!). Along with variety in approaches, I think it expedient these days to struggle against succumbing to pessimism—to cajole, bribe, and cheer for success. Instead of being defeated in bewilderment, we move on with the affirmation of Voltaire's Candide that we must "cultivate our garden."

Using Their Pastime as Ammunition: A Video Approach to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

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Asked to describe the monster in *Frankenstein,* the average student often gives details of a green complected, bolt necked, imbecilic, destructive dolt of Hollywood fame. Patrons of Shelley's novel, however, know that the creature Victor endows with life hardly resembles the Karloff version of the being. But few students will ever delve far enough into the novel to reach the discovery that the monster is "a thing such as even Dante could not have conceived" (46). Why? As *Frankenstein* scholar George Levine explains, "It is commonplace now that everybody talks about *Frankenstein,* but nobody reads it" (30). According to Levine, students today are so familiar with Hollywood versions and commercial manifestations of *Frankenstein* characters that they don't feel inclined to read the novel.

So how can teachers lure students back to Shelley's work? Use the very medium that caused them to digress in the first place—film! Not sensational flicks such as *The Bride of Frankenstein* or *Abbot and Costello Meet Frankenstein and the Wolf Man.* Instead, approach *Frankenstein* through one or all of the contemporary films: *Blade Runner, RoboCop,* and *Young Frankenstein.* This may seem like an odd method, but the titles are readily available on cable television and videotape, their quality is reasonable, they present clear links to *Frankenstein,* and they seduce video junkies into reading Shelley's text. In fact, these modern interpretations make Shelley's "dusty classic" (as one of my students called it) pertinent and accessible to students because they see modern Promethean dramas with related themes being played out in their own popular culture.

Preparation

Before any comparative work can be done, students must first read and learn a little about Shelley's novel. Tell them that they will be comparing it to the film you've selected. They'll have something to look forward to and will read more carefully. Ask students to list and describe characters and note the development of themes and topics in *Frankenstein.* Levine mentions birth and creation, the overreacher, rebellion and isolation, the unjust society, the defects of domesticity, the double, technology, entropy, and the monstrous. (8-16)

The Approach

Students are usually enthusiastic about class time for films. Nonetheless, guide them and direct their attention to parallel issues and details you want them to see. Use (1) study questions, which compare and contrast similarities and differences between the text and provide fuel for post-viewing discussions and essays; (2) journal entries, which give students room to reflect upon particular aspects of the novel and the film; (3) essay topics, which require students to synthesize and analyze how the writer and director present the material; and (4) discussion topics, which allow a forum for students to exchange their ideas. Examples of each type of assignment follow.

Study Questions

RoboCop

1. Describe RoboCop. What's man? Machine? What qualities make him human or monstrous? Compare his body to the monster's. Similarities? Differences?

2. Compare the use of dreams in *RoboCop* and *Frankenstein*.

3. What characters in *RoboCop* are Promethean and why?

4. How is RoboCop's search for identity similar to the monster's? Who do RoboCop and the monster turn to for answers?

5. How is RoboCop's integrity repaid? What is this similar to in *Frankenstein*?

Blade Runner

1. What information are we given about the replicants' creation, purpose, and treatment in the preface to the film? Compare the replicants' creation to the monster's creation and Victor's intentions for the monster before he was animated.

2. Compare the effect of the landscape in *Blade Runner* to that in *Frankenstein*.

3. Who narrates the film? What character does the narrator parallel in *Frankenstein?*

4. What do the replicants want from Tyrell? What does the monster want from Victor?

5. Why do two replicants save Deckard's life? How are they like the monster?

Young Frankenstein

1. Compare Young Frankenstein's monster with Frankenstein's monster. What similarities and differences do you find? Account for the differences.

2. How are the film and the novel concerned with names and naming?

3. Compare and contrast Elizabeths. Why is Madeline Kahn's character so exaggerated?

4. How does the film explain how the monster is created?

5. What episodes in the novel (for example, the hermit) are satirized in the film?

Journal Entries

1. In what sense do *RoboCop* and *Frankenstein* express a fear of science getting out of hand? What solutions do they seem to offer?

2. In *Blade Runner*, Deckard notes, "Replicants weren't supposed to have feelings, neither were Blade Runners." Do you think Victor believed or considered this view in the early stages of his experiment?

3. *Young Frankenstein* contains many humorous instances. Are there any comic moments that you recall in Shelley's novel? If so, why do you suppose she decided to include these? If not, why do you suppose she did not include comic moments in the novel?

Essay Topics

1. Compare and contrast the creator / created relationship in the films with that in the novel. What is peculiar about these parents and children? Why do you suppose these relationships exist?

2. According to the novel and the films you've studied, what makes a person human? Give specific examples to back your assertions. What ethical questions do the films raise? Why is it important that this issue continues to crop up?

3. Consider the ending of the novel and the films you've studied. Why do you suppose the writers have chosen to take their characters in these directions, to close things this way? How do the endings tie in with their treatment of the Promethean myth? How do the endings tie in with purpose and audience?

Discussion Topics

When compared with *Frankenstein*, *Robocop*, *Blade Runner*, and *Young Frankenstein* lend themselves to a number of general discussion topics. The following are suggestions:

1. Discuss why the films and Shelley's text have a difficult time defining what makes a person human. Do any of the films or Shelley's text provide an explicit definition?

2. Consider the films and *Frankenstein* in light of advances in modern technology (cryogenics, cybernetics, and genetic engineering, for example). In the future, how might films and novels help people understand the ethics of relating to new and different types of human beings?

3. Talk about fears these works express. Who or what seems to be getting out of hand?

4. Consider the Gothic qualities present in the films and the novel. How do these qualities enhance your response to the works?

5. Discuss parental figures the "monsters" have. Could their parents have something to do with the way they are?

6. Note the role of women in these films. What physical and emotional qualities do the female characters share? What are their strengths and weaknesses?

7. Discuss male figures in these films. What physical and emotional qualities do the male characters share? What are their strengths and weaknesses?

8. Compare monsters. What physical and emotional qualities do the monsters

share? Do they have any qualities that are endearing? What are their most frightening or monstrous features? How primal or intellectual are they?

9. Think about whether or not the works you've seen and read are at all humorous. If you think they are, what are the sources and the subjects of this humor?

10. Speculate as to how Mary Shelley might react to the film you viewed.

11. Discuss how recent releases such as *Edward Scissor Hands* and *RoboCop II* may be linked to *Frankenstein*.

Conclusion

The suggested films and methods for study are in no way intended to replace classroom attention to the novel. They can, however, serve as a carrot for luring students into *Frankenstein* by sparking classroom interest and discussion of the novel and selected film. Through a video approach, Shelley's and Victor's creations become more accessible. Students are able to see that the themes and characters of *Frankenstein* continue to be refined and re-written on the silver screen of the twentieth century.

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A Novel Feast

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Teachers, have you ever read a novel that was simply *delicious*? Do you *devour* good literature? Do you long to have your students *savor the taste* of fine writing? Then how about letting them *eat* their novels? That is precisely what happened at the end of a "reading cycle" in my seventh- and eighth-grade language arts classes.

To foster a little non-structured chatting about our novels-of-choice, I planned to have a party at which our novels would provide not only the conversations but the food as well. The students were asked to bring their novels to class along with a snack food which was eaten in the story or which illustrated a topic or character in the book. I dubbed the party a "Novel Feast."

We spent a few minutes each day the week before the party brainstorming possibilities for books that I brought to the class as examples. The students soon got the concept and began to come to me with wonderful and wild ideas for their own books: a bottle of soda pop for *The Outsider*, chips and salsa for a Tony Hillerman mystery.

On the morning of the party, the tables were arranged like picnic tables with chairs around the walls. One by one the students placed their goody on a table and explained its significance to their novel. Jake, who was reading Stephen King's *It*, brought clown-shaped fruit snacks. Greg, who read *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, brought cinnamon red hots to symbolize the earth's core. Kim brought red Kool-Aid because she had read *Dark Angel*, a story about vampires. Naomi brought marshmallows because of the nickname of a Paul Zindel character. I contributed by bringing matzah crackers in honor of Jane Yolen's *The Devil's Arithmetic*.

We had such a good time munching treats and chatting about our books. It was a wonderful opportunity to socialize in a literate environment. A lot of laughing and giggling and book-swapping went on during the party. The students' last words were "When are we doing this again?"

"Soon," I promised with an unspoken wish that they do this again and again with and without me. Maybe now that novels are so yummy, they will!

Strange Bedfellows? Memos and Composition

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As teachers of composition, we face the exciting but often frustrating challenge of establishing the relevancy of writing in the "real world" to our students. Too often high school and college students view writing assignments as just another hoop they must jump through, another task they must complete that has no importance to their present world or to their future. As a result, many never fully grasp such fundamental writing concepts as audience and purpose which, if understood, would enable them to see more clearly the value and relevancy of writing. In response to these concerns, we require our students to attach a memo of transmittal to the front of their out-of-class writing projects. In the workplace, a memo of transmittal covers an important document; it is a messenger which personally informs and often persuades the receiver about certain information. In the classroom, we use memos for other purposes as well. Our goals are twofold: (1) to help students understand and explain their writing in terms of basic rhetorical principles, and (2) to teach them memo writing, an important writing task on the job.

We teach memo writing by first explaining to our students why learning to write memos is important. We ask students to share future career goals, and as they mention engineering, business, education, medicine, and law, the subject of job responsibilities eventually surfaces. Through such informal discussion we are able to point out that the skill of memo writing is used widely in the "real world," thus proving the benefit of learning memo writing in the classroom. Students will usually have little difficulty in seeing that memo writing might one day be applicable to a future job; however, they will question its usefulness to their assigned writing projects. We tell our students that by attaching memos of transmittal to their assignments, they will take a positive, active role in telling us how to read the attached assignment and in persuading us of its value.

Next, we explain the purpose of a memo of transmittal and discuss the information it should contain. For our students, a memo of transmittal is a one-page informal document that covers their assignment. Students organize their memos with traditional headings: TO (teacher), FROM (student), SUBJECT (student's writing project), and DATE. Then they write a brief statement or paragraph that introduces their memo, followed by a discussion of their attached assignment in terms of the rhetorical principles of audience, purpose, situation, and writer's role.

Incorporating this assignment into the composition curriculum depends upon the teacher's course syllabus and the students' needs. Since each class environment is unique, methods of implementation may vary. We would like to offer several general suggestions:

- Teach by example. Begin by handing out your own personal memo at the beginning of the term, explaining memos of transmittal and how they will be used in the course.
- Use the chalkboard and overhead projector to create and edit memos in class.
- Give students preliminary memo exercises. They can write memos to other teachers, friends, and parents.
- Critique memos in peer editing groups and assign them as homework.
- Grade student memos. Although we do not assign a grade to the first memo, we have found that unless subsequent memos are graded, they will be viewed as "busy work."

Memo writing serves to increase students' "ownership" of their writing, forcing them to rely less on their teacher and more on their own decision-making skills. Many students are in the habit of depending on their teacher to mold the direction of their writing for them. However, when students realize and assume responsibility for determining the course of their writing, such as choosing a specific audience, they feel that they are in the driver's seat.

Also, students play a more active role in the grading process. Requiring students to identify and discuss elements such as writer's role and purpose results in the reflection on a specific rhetorical framework for each writing project completed. Students can refer to this framework to see if their writing actually reflects their purpose or is suitable for a specific audience—areas the teacher will surely evaluate. Therefore, not only are students aware of grading criteria as they write, but they assist in establishing such criteria.

Memo writing offers teacher benefits as well. Memos of transmittal facilitate grading the attached writing assignment. Having students identify their audience, purpose, situation, and role as writer eliminates any guesswork for the teacher. Instead of searching for who might be an appropriate audience for a particular piece, teachers grade the assignment based on the rhetorical framework created by the student. Another benefit of using memos is that they give teachers freedom to create open assignments that require students to take the initiative with their own writing. The teacher can then assume the role of a coach and facilitator rather than a dictator. A final teacher benefit of memo writing is that communication between student and teacher is strengthened and clarified. As students write successive memos, they begin to see the teacher as a writing coach and mentor, someone who is interested in their writing and their lives.

Call For Manuscripts

Alabama English is seeking manuscripts for publication in its subsequent issues. We are particularly looking for discussions of classroom method and educational philosophy in the teaching of reading, writing, and literature at all grade levels from kindergarten through college. These articles can range in length from 1250 to 4000 words. We also are interested in publishing teaching tips about classroom assignments, short poems that are directly related to teaching and other professional experiences, and essays discussing professional concerns at either a national or a state level. Teaching tips should be 1000 words or less, and essays about professional concerns should be 250 words or less.

All submissions should be typed double space. Please send three copies. If you want your manuscript returned, please enclose a self-addressed mailing envelope with postage attached by a paper clip.

All manuscripts should follow the guidelines in the most recent edition of the *MLA Handbook*.

Submit manuscripts to the following address:

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Alabama English
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Samford University
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Teaching Advanced Composition: Why and How

Edited by Katherine H. Adams and John L. Adams. Portsmouth:
Boynton / Cook / Heinemann, 1991. 298 pp.

Reviewed by
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For the reasons described by Katherine Adams in the Preface to this book, many who teach the college courses called "advanced composition" have felt lonely. While they have relished the opportunity to teach a select group of students, usually in their junior or senior years with some experience in their majors, and welcomed the freedom from the prescriptions of most freshman composition programs, advanced composition teachers have lacked the sense of a shared identity and common aims possessed by their colleagues in such specialized writing courses as technical writing and business writing, whose students are taught to write for more clearly defined audiences outside the university. At CCCC and regional MLA meetings where it is included in advanced writing sessions with creative writing and other specialized writing courses, advanced composition has rarely seemed to merit separate discussion.

Now teachers as well as administrators who seek excellence in their offerings will find their questions formulated and discussed in this collection of essays. The writers are respected in the field as authors of textbooks (Richard M. Coe, Richard E. Young, Jeanne Fahnestock, and John Gage), as conference leaders and consultants (Toby Fulwiler and Toni Haring-Smith), and as editors for the NCTE or editors and contributors to *Journal of Advanced Composition* (Gary A. Olson, Evelyn Ashton-Jones, Timothy R. Donovan, and William A. Covino). For new teachers of advanced composition, the history of the course will be useful, and the excellent annotated bibliography will end the frustration of searching through all composition studies for these important essays.

All teachers will find practical help—new assignments or refinements for their current practices—in seven full course descriptions. Argument, which seems to many teachers the primary mode to be taught in an advanced course, is especially well represented in three essays, by Young, Gage, and Fahnestock, each of which describes specific assignments and offers a full rationale for the course. In recognition that advanced composition, as the last writing course in college, should empower students to achieve intelligent control of their writing and to respond to a diversity of particular real-life writing situations, Coe offers Metaheur, a heuristic for analyzing any type of writing in order to learn it; Donovan and Janet Carr describe "Real World Research: Writing Beyond the Curriculum." For a course named "Personal Voice," Fulwiler provides readings and exercises. Mary Fuller defends teaching style in advanced composition and describes ways of helping students to increase their stylistic options. Two essays describe courses that approach the writing of literary non-fiction in ways appropriate for advanced students, requiring them to make complex negotiations between themselves and specific discourse communities. All of these course descriptions include useful accounts of aims and techniques and note problems that may arise; they are most valuable, however, for their analyses of the sequencing of assignments, a kind of knowledge that comes only from considerable experience.

Theory is not neglected. The case for teaching rhetorical theory in advanced composition is well-argued by Haring-Smith of Brown University. Although the first section of the book, "Theoretical Perspectives on Advanced Composition" is not entirely successful in the aim of "Distinguishing Advanced Courses from the Freshman Sequence," it does offer a variety of useful insights about students' development. Michael Carter pursues a promising direction by applying psychological studies of expertise to writing. In Covino's view, which is supported in a call for redefining critical thinking by Olson and Ashton-Jones and elsewhere, advanced composition should train students to entertain multiple perspectives, "to reformulate discourse to make new connections, new emphases and new knowledge," abilities that will be valued in the postmodern workplace.

Although expectations obviously differ from school to school, an experienced teacher who reads this book will find much common ground between her own practices and convictions and those described, if not the beginnings of consensus on some questions. Most of the writers agree that advanced composition students should be distinguished from those in freshman composition by the ability to move beyond applying rules and formulas toward a sophisticated ability to "satisfy the unique demands of a particular situation by thinking about [their] own ideas, those of [their] audience, and the quality of reasons [they] might use to bring [their] readers and [themselves] into earned agreement." Among the writers on argument the emphasis is on dialogue or dialectic, on avoiding foreclosure on problematical issues, and always on teaching argument not as a set of strategies for winning a debate but as a means of knowledge. Agreement appears also in discussions of the roles teachers and the writing class should play for students who are ready to turn from purely academic writing toward real writing tasks in the real world.

Throughout the book there is considerable hand-wringing over the diversity revealed by various surveys of advanced composition courses conducted from 1980 to the present. A survey of 12 colleges and universities, not dated but apparently conducted for this book by Michael Keene and Ray Wallace, illustrates what is wrong with that approach to defining the course. Given the limitations of the survey, the kind of questions asked and the description of advanced composition as any course that is not technical writing, creative writing, or writing across the curriculum, it is not surprising that the writers concluded in despair that the most common difference between advanced composition and freshman composition was the requirement of longer papers. Such a conclusion, of course, is belied by the evidence in the rest of the book. Plainly Olson is right to argue in the Afterword that we need to "transcend the data-gathering mode" and attempt to establish a firm theoretical rationale. Perhaps the essays in this book, both theoretical and practical, will mark the beginning of that undertaking. Without question *Teaching Advanced Composition* will help teachers improve their courses and offer, in good measure, a satisfying sense of community.

Stories To Grow On: Demonstrations of Language Learning in K-8 Classrooms

Edited by Julie M. Jensen. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1989. 183 pp.

Reviewed by
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Stories To Grow On is a product of the English Coalition Conference held in 1987. This invitational conference was planned by the National Council of Teachers of English and the Modern Language Association as a summit conference of leaders in the field. The mission was to assess the state of English language arts teaching and to attempt to provide direction for the profession in the 1990s and beyond.

Leaders of NCTE and MLA had been meeting informally and occasionally in the late 1970s and early 1980s, more or less to keep in touch. Sometime in 1984, the idea for a new Dartmouth conference to examine the English language arts curriculum and its teaching emerged. Plans were set for a three-week meeting in 1987. Ultimately, the foundations and agencies that supported the conference included the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities as well as the Rockefeller Foundation and the Exxon Education Foundation. What was remarkable and different about the 1987 meeting was, first, the substantial cadre of elementary teachers and language arts specialists who attended in contrast with the almost total absence of such professionals at similar conferences held in 1958 and 1966. Second was the presence of a large cadre of practicing teachers in the elementary and secondary schools.

Stories To Grow On enlarges the work of 15 conferees representing language arts teaching at the elementary school level. It is divided into two parts. Part 1 presents the final conference report of the elementary group, "Language Arts For The 21st Century: A Vision For Elementary School English Teaching

From the Coalition of English Associations Conference." This section discusses goals for the teaching of English in the elementary school, describes the person to emerge from the elementary school classroom, looks inside the elementary classroom, and advises about the selection and use of materials in an effective elementary classroom.

Part 2 presents the "how I did it well" language arts experiences of eight elementary classroom teachers. These descriptions of teaching methods will become the basis for principles of good practice. Chapters included discuss the value of classroom libraries, the use of computers in language arts studies, and the self-evaluation process as used by students in their writing. In the margins of these chapters, major points from the conference are highlighted as they are illustrated in the "stories."

Although they are all about teaching in elementary or middle schools, the stories tell of diverse experiences. Carol Avery tells about the first day of school in her first-grade classroom. From that day forward, children listen to and talk about books, and they read and write in book-filled surroundings. C. Jane Hydrick describes how her second graders use computers in their study of Native Americans. Because computers help to manage information, the children are better able to control the content and purpose of their learning. Susan Stires tells a story about primary-grade learning disabled students who demonstrate their ability to write and to evaluate their writing. Fred Burton's third- and fourth-grade classroom is the setting for his observations of how children borrow from and improvise on their literary experiences when they write.

The diversity continues throughout the collection. The collaborative relationship Donna Carrara establishes with her fourth graders continues as the students move through the grades. She is a supportive partner in learning who describes the sources of her support. Mary Kitagawa's story is set in her half Mexican American, half Native American sixth-grade classroom. Through varied and personally interesting experiences, students talk, read, and write their way to better understanding of their own and other cultures. Diane Orchard tells how her sixth-grade students listen, speak, read, and write in order to learn and share information about their state's history. Using primary sources, the students raise questions and find answers. Their learning is interdisciplinary, personal, involving, and enjoyable. In her story about a middle school classroom, Mary Krogness reveals a quest for student engagement and an ability to look for small victories. Talk is central in this classroom: "Talk is, after all, the heart of the matter; it is also a matter of the heart."

I found these eight stories to be a valuable source of creative learning activities and the book quite readable. Therefore, I would recommend it to elementary school teachers dedicated to improving their students' language arts experiences.

Lizard

By Dennis Covington. New York: Delacorte, 1991. 198 pp.

Reviewed by
Patricia Gaston
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Lizard is the winner of the eighth Annual Delacorte Prize For A First Young Adult Novel. Its uncomplicated plot and interesting 13-year-old protagonist account for this delineation, but the sheer beauty of its language and the intricacy of that character's development make it an intriguing novel for a variety of readers—and account for the award. Around 1976, Lucius Sims, the central character, is sent to a state school for the retarded when his guardian Miss Cooley gets married. Lucius regards this move as a neutral event, mildly misses Miss Cooley, and gains a certain self-confidence while at the Leesville State School. But when a pair of itinerant actors performs at the school, he decides to run away. He sees them as a vehicle for the journey he plans to take looking for his father. Initially, the pair refuses Lucius' request. Later, however, Cal, the actor who had played Long John Silver in the school play and is now playing the role of Lucius' lost father and calling himself George Simonetti, returns to remove Lucius from the school. The rest of the novel involves Lucius' discovery that Cal is in fact not his biological father, but the novel ends with his observation that "All I knew was that I hated to see him go. It's true that he was not my real father, but he might as well have been." Lizard's remark suggests one of the main points made by Covington's text: that indeed all children are the children of us all.

Like many novels for adolescents, this one is based on a journey motif, the point of which is the discovery of the central character's true identity and initiation into adulthood. Lucius Sims travels from DeRidder, Louisiana, where he has always lived with Miss Cooley, to the Leesville State School, to a stretch of woods "twelve miles east of Newllano"; then, he "cross[es] the Mississippi River at Vicksburg" and goes on to Birmingham. After some time there, he reverses the journey (without the state school) and returns home. Lizard's journey is an interesting inversion of a device often used in American literature. Instead of heading west or "lighting out for the territories" as Huck Finn and numerous others have done before him, he heads northeast. Then, he turns around and returns home. Thus, this journey is a cyclical one, a characteristic indicating comedy, and the novel ends with Lizard reunited with his mother, safe, and integrated into his community for the first time.

In the course of this journey, Lucius discovers several important things. While he set out in search of his father, he finds his mother instead. And he verifies what he has suspected all along: that his odd physical appearance masks strength and uniqueness. As a marker of Lucius' changing identity, he is named "Lizard" by a friend at Leesville and claims this name as his own at the end of the story by renaming himself to Miss Cooley, whom he has discovered is in fact his mother. He also uses the name during his adventures among theatre people in Birmingham, Cal and Sally's destination. Covington brings his own extensive experience with Birmingham theatre to effective account here.

The importance of naming himself, and so of arriving at a positive identity, is paralleled in the incidents concerning Lizard's friends Rain and Sammy, who offer versions of their own family story to fill in for their absent parents. Lizard meets the two black children living on their own in the woods near Newllano, where they are being victimized by Reverend Ephraim Smith, another ersatz father figure. Their mother is missing and they (like Lucius) don't know their father. It becomes Lizard's mission to contact their "aunt in Detroit" and alert her to their danger. When Aunt Eunice comes for them, she tells a story which accounts for Rain's name and clarifies her identity.

The novel's journey motif also introduces Lizard to a series of human concerns. These include the confusing and intricate nature of relationships between the sexes, among generations, and among races; between language and experience, appearance and reality; of sexuality; and of friendship. Several times Lizard makes remarks such as ". . . I tried not to get my hopes up too far. If I'd learned anything since I left the state school, it was that things never work out the way they're planned . . . ." But like the novel's other inversions, this depressing remark leads to Lizard's discovery of the redemptiveness of surprise. Covington's novel cautions against asking for or accepting definitions which are too glib, too quick, or too easy. Lizard learns (as does the reader) that the world is much more intricate than that.

Lizard's own physical deformities—which account for why Miss Cooley's fiances reject him again and again and for how he is admitted to the Leesville School—parallel this discovery. They act as a disguise and as a costume (allowing him to play Caliban while in Birmingham), but they also hint at the feelings that most young adults have of their own unsuitability, ugliness, oddness. In this intensely visual novel, the narrator spends little time describing his own deformity, mainly because he rarely falls into his own line of vision, but also because he doesn't regard himself as ugly. Lizard's view of the world is literally "cockeyed" and this becomes a virtue in the novel. While he cannot use binoculars, for example, and so his view of certain aspects of the physical world is limited, Lizard can view all things aesthetically and tolerantly. This point is illustrated in the following exchange between Lizard and his friend, the director of the Birmingham art museum:

> "Try looking a little more to the side," Mr. Howell said. "Distant lights are brighter when viewed peripherally."
>
> "What does that mean?" I asked.

> "Sometimes things are clearer when you don't look at them head on," he answered.

Lizard's physical deformity literally prevents him from looking at things head on, but his deflected vision allows him to see what many miss—for example, the interconnectedness of all humankind, how difficult indeed human life is, and how it is possible to live well with this knowledge.

Student Worlds, Student Words: Teaching Writing Through Folklore

By Elizabeth Radin Simons. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1990. 232 pp.

Reviewed by
Charles Avinger
Troy State University, Troy, Alabama

"I can't think of anything to write about" is an all-too-familiar refrain in writing classes, a source of discouragement for teachers and a reflection of frustration or lack of interest on the part of students. Elizabeth Radin Simons offers a solution to this problem in her book, *Student Worlds, Student Words: Teaching Writing Through Folklore,* which opens up the rich field of folklore as the raw material for all kinds of student writing, from personal experience narratives to argumentative essays. By combining the study of folklore with a process approach to writing that stresses active learning, Simons provides a model curriculum that is academically sound and pedagogically valid, as well as clearly presented and well-designed for classroom use.

For those unfamiliar with the field of folklore, chapter one presents a good introductory discussion of the subject. Folklore is broad in scope, including such diverse things as myths, legends, children's games, local customs, jokes, family photographs, some religious celebrations, "tall tales," and graffiti. Folklore is distinguished from both elite culture (art, literature, theater) and popular culture (network television, bestselling novels, comics) and may be identified by four defining characteristics. It is traditional, many forms of folklore having existed for centuries. It is anonymous in origin, though often collected or put in writing by specific individuals. (Thus the story of Oedipus is Greek folklore, while Sophocles' play is a work of literature *based* on folklore.) It is not usually learned in a formal setting, but rather passed on from one person to another, often orally. For this reason, it exists in different versions. Like popular culture, folklore is not typically studied in school, so Simons spends some time providing scholarly justification for its inclusion in the curriculum.

Since Simons' lesson plans are structured around a process approach to writing, she devotes a chapter to explaining this method. While the stages of the writing process—prewriting, drafting, responding, revising, editing, and publishing—are probably familiar to most English teachers, Simons' overview is helpful, particularly in showing how to integrate folklore study with composition. Anyone unfamiliar with process-oriented teaching will find Simons' step-by-step methodology clear and easy to follow, a set of directions that can be readily implemented in any secondary classroom. This chapter also briefly discusses learning logs and peer response groups, integral components of Simons' methodology.

The remainder of the book is a series of lesson plans and classroom narratives that clearly describe how the various types of folklore can be taught in conjunction with writing. Simons believes that much of students' difficulty with writing can be traced to unengaging topics and problems of self-image and confidence in writing ability. Because of the personal nature of much folklore and its intrinsic interest for students, using folklore in the classroom can help students overcome these hurdles. As Simons notes, "students like the subject and are in control because the material comes from their own lives." Topics covered include introducing the concept of folklore, names, childhood games, family stories and photographs, and modern urban legends. Each chapter gives a day-by-day plan for the unit, each activity and assignment clearly described and illustrated with examples of student dialogue and writing. Supplementary resources and activities are listed throughout.

Student Worlds, Student Words presents a thoughtful blend of theory and practice. Simons' expertise in the field of folklore is combined with experience in the classroom to produce a book designed for "the busy classroom teacher who may not have time to read the whole book before starting a unit." Simons recognizes the English teacher's need for specific activities and exercises that can be put to use in the classroom, and she provides those specifics, both in detailed narrative form and as a "Unit in Brief" outline at the end of each chapter. The book is appropriate for all secondary teachers, regardless of grade level or previous knowledge of folklore. And, while the book contains sufficient material to support a folklore unit by itself, it also lists numerous resources for teachers and students who want to explore folklore in more detail. (One excellent resource not listed is *Introduction to Folklore* by David Laubach, published by Boynton / Cook—a perfect companion piece to Simons' book.)

One caveat: careful judgment and consideration might be needed before trying out some of this book's suggestions in the classroom. Folklore is a broad and diverse field, and some of the topics Simons covers, such as graffiti, teenage dating customs, drug lore, and urban legends, would undoubtedly raise eyebrows in some schools. However, Simons includes enough "safe" topics such as family history, children's toys, and folk heroes that thoughtful teachers can draw sufficient material from the book to construct units appropriate for their classes. Keeping the need for individual judgment in mind, teachers should find *Student Worlds, Student Words* to be a valuable classroom resource, a work that stresses the essential connection between writing and life experience too often lacking in writing classes.

Writing from Start to Finish

By John Schultz. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1990. 258 pp.

Reviewed by
Patricia Laird Peoples
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This is not a pretty book, nor does it try to be. It is a roll-up-your-sleeves, get-your-hands-moving, and write book. Just write. The author practices what he preaches and writes his book in the style he advocates. His message rings loud and clear page after page. Let your voice be heard on paper. Write as you talk. The author would probably concur with the sentiment expressed by the singer Jerry Jeff Walker: "Anything you can do on any level can be made so much better by your personality shining through."

The book reads as if Schultz is talking the writer through the process. It is an easy-to-read book filled with short, point-blank questions after the models. He calls attention to important points in each writer's work that give the writing its particular style. For example, in analyzing a model by Robert Penn Warren, Schultz asks the reader to notice the use of the conditional mood in the first paragraph and to consider how the model-telling of the first paragraph differs from the summary of the second paragraph. In analyzing a selection by Larry Heinemann, he asks the reader to notice the use of present tense, then past tense, and then the use of the conditional. Almost conversational in style, Schultz encourages the writer to focus on an immediate audience. He emphasizes bridging the gap between a person's ability for oral expression and the ability to transfer this message to paper.

Schultz advocates teaching writing without teaching formal grammar. Although he thinks students need basic information such as labels to facilitate discussions, instruction in formal grammar should be avoided. Misplaced punctuation and misspellings are both problems that can be handled in the writing class as students write.

The book is designed to be used in a year-long college-level composition course. This edition is a reissue of a longer version, redone at the request of teachers who had used the book but found it too long to adequately cover in one year. The language and reading level of the models are best suited for college students. The models used in this book would make it a worthy addition for anyone interested in writing or anyone who appreciates a wide range of literature from Kafka to Melville to Tom Wolfe. Several models written by undergraduate students are also included.

Schultz reiterates his message—connect your voice to your writing—in every chapter, in every mode of writing. He begins the book with a "how to" section. The writer is encouraged to tell an audience "how to" do anything that the writer knows how to do well. The idea is to relay a message to an immediate audience. This immediacy gives writing a personal focus. One fun selection is "how to" make lasagna. The writer lists ingredients, carries the reader through the process, replete with textures, smells, and a warning to watch the cat. He maintains that anyone can tell anything and tell it well if it is written as if it is a letter. Simply erase the salutation and a personal piece of writing results.

The most interesting advice comes from the chapter "The Process of Writing." Hand gestures and facial gestures from oral telling should be transferred to writing. Schultz explains that using action verbs, similes, metaphors, and comparisons will produce lively writing that conveys gestures from oral telling. For example, in the "how to" section a writer describes how to make chitterlings. "Like a claw" and "tiny web designs" are explanations that give information and would have been gestures if these instructions had been told rather than written. What could be shown by facial expressions and body movement must be added to writing if writers want their personalities to come through.

This book has good models, followed by discussion that is easy to understand. The author gives activities after each mode of writing. He covers essays, letters, invent your own monster, model-telling, point-of-view, how to, journal writing, folktales, and story-within-a-story. The chapters (there are only six) are long but interesting. The models are varied and should hold the interest of most students. Teachers who believe that imitating models is in direct opposition with the advice to write with your own voice will probably be interested in what Schultz says about the use of so many models. *Writing From Start to Finish* is organized in sections and in a sequence using a variety of accessible literary models that will help students develop an awareness of the components of the engine of writing ability that is available to them. Nowhere in the book does Schultz ask students to imitate any of the models. He merely uses them to point out how authors have accomplished making their particular voices heard through writing.

Teachers who like informal writing styles, implemented without lengthy discussions of theory, will appreciate this book. Schultz moves through each section with discussions about a particular mode of writing followed by models. After the models, he follows with a short discussion calling the reader's attention to patterns in the models or contrasts. The models can be a bit bizarre, such as the one included in satires and parodies about owning a little piece of Elvis or the section about creating your own monster. Students should enjoy the diversion though. This book could never be considered dry.

Opening Texts: Using Writing to Teach Literature

By Kathleen Dudden Andrasick. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1990. 208 pp.

Reviewed by
Melissa Kendrick
Troy State University, Troy, Alabama

Promoting critical thinking among students is fast becoming a major issue for literature teachers. *Opening Texts: Using Writing to Teach Literature* handles the confusion of teachers in promoting critical inquiry. The book deals with refocusing our teaching so that we are not limiting a student's creativity by concentrating only on thesis-driven papers. By thesis-driven papers, Andrasick means papers that are designed as five-paragraph themes: Introduction, Point 1, Point 2, Point 3, and Conclusion.

Andrasick begins her refocusing process by stressing the important connections among reading, writing, and discussion, while also enforcing the necessity for sequenced or connected assignments. If these activities are sequenced, students can make personal connections and begin the first steps in critical inquiry. Reading, writing, and discussion are part of the process that she has found works in her class when promoting critical thinking among her students.

Andrasick points to the necessity for students to think about texts on their own. She suggests that teachers should move away from the simple regurgitating of facts and on to a new frontier of learning. Teachers must require students to question the text. By using supporting quotes from such educators as Elbow and Bartholomae and such psychologists as Vygotsky, Andrasick points out that the thesis-driven paper, although "historically established," limits student writing. Teachers must reprogram their teaching so that students can "reclaim the range of critical discourse."

"Enabling Critical Conversation," the second chapter, is devoted to this discourse in the classroom. A quote from Herman Melville begins this chapter: "Careful disorderliness is the true method." Power in the classroom is put into the students' hands. Andrasick includes several useful activities that influence discussion and collaboration, promoting Melville's "careful disorderliness." She provides a specific outline, beginning at Day 1 and ending at Day 7, for teachers to follow when teaching *The Red Badge of Courage*. Students work in groups, asking questions about images such as thirst and hunger in *The Red Badge of Courage*. The teacher is not posing questions; students are asking questions. Objectives are available for teachers to follow, if they wish, and the chapter includes homework assignments and examples of how discussions emerged in the classroom.

After going through the "fundamentals" of discussion in the classroom, the next three chapters focus on teaching students the first steps of critical inquiry in writing. Through such methods as dialogue journals, process logs, and reading responses, students have hands-on experience so that they can "connect with texts," while also feeling "free to be tentative, speculative, and exploratory." For example, students use a reading response, which is a form of free writing, to question the text. The responsibility for learning is placed on the student. As in chapter 2, specific examples are given for teachers to employ when using the three methods mentioned above.

"Imitation and Transforming Texts" and "Transforming and Acquiring Texts" spiral off the confidence-gaining methods of dialogue journals, process logs, and reading responses and on to teaching students ways about literary criticism. These two chapters confront the problem students have when trying to analyze or disagree with "great" works like those of Shakespeare. Andrasick invites students to look at and write about texts in a different way—a way of imitation. Andrasick points to Milton, who imitated Isocrates and Petrarchan sonnets, and Benjamin Franklin, who imitated parts of the *Spectator* in his *Poor Richard's Almanack*. By using imitation, students are acting as writers. Students imitate Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* by pretending that they are mentally retarded. They record what they hear, see, and feel. These two chapters free "students from the conventional tyrannies that often block their ability to read and write creatively."

Sequencing of activities is the final method for completing the process for promoting creative writing and critical thinking. Andrasick deals specifically with fiction and poetry. Activities for poetry and fiction abound throughout the chapters. Aristotle's topoi, Kenneth Burke's Pentad, and David Bleich's progression conclude the chapter as other methods fostering critical inquiry.

Opening Texts is a beneficial book for all high school English teachers who want to move away from teaching three weeks of literature and then three weeks of grammar. Instead of separating the components of literacy, they can combine reading, writing, and discussion. This text is not filled with theory. Andrasick clearly and successfully argues for revamping our teaching of literature by telling us why and confirming teaching fears that it will be a scary undertaking. Because the students rather than the teacher are the center of the instruction, there will be a degree of unpredictability.

Andrasick claims that a literary text should be read as a whole, not divided into chapters of required reading. But teachers already have problems getting students to read material, so how can we expect to get students to read the whole text at one time? Andrasick deals with this problem also. Students who have not completed the reading are assigned to work in the library with a "long . . . research question connected to the text." The message to the students is that they will have to do more work than if they had read the book.

Opening Texts is an excellent book for teachers of literature who are concerned with ways of encouraging students to think on their own. It is for teachers who are more interested in students' understanding a text than in simply covering or finishing a text in literature class. A valuable part of Andrasick's book is her examples. She tells us we need to change our way of teaching and then gives objectives, homework assignments, and questions for discussion. Responses from Andrasick's students to the exercises encountered will help teachers see how discussions flowed in the actual classroom. The emphasis is on infusing reading, writing, and discussion. By combining these three elements, Andrasick believes students will eventually begin to think on their own.

The Psychology of Writing: The Affective Experience

By Alice Glarden Brand. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1989. 259 pp.

Reviewed by
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Illinois Central College, East Peoria, Illinois

Reading and writing about *The Psychology of Writing* is an emotional experience. In fact, during these weeks of reviewing, I ran the gamut of the 20 positive and negative emotions which Alice Brand identifies in her Emotions Scale for Writers: Confused, Disgusted, Frustrated, Depressed, Angry, Afraid, Lonely, Ashamed, Shy, Bored, Interested, Excited, Inspired, Happy, Adventurous, Relieved, Affectionate, Surprised, Anxious, Satisfied. Now I find that I fit right into the conclusion that Brand has drawn from her research: although writers' emotions change during their writing, when the writing is completed, most writers feel better. By publishing this book, Brand has accomplished her purpose: to broaden our knowledge of the role of complicated and invisible emotions in the writing process.

For writers and for teachers of writing like us, what are the implications of Brand's conclusions? *The Psychology of Writing* justifies what good teachers know: emotion is at the core of life's meaning. Those teachers motivated by passion (emotion) are the best teachers; in turn, those students who become impassioned learners gain the most from their education. But knowing is not always being able to prove what we know. Admitting that she is fully aware of this difficulty, Brand nevertheless tackles that difficult task and tries to justify the important role that emotion plays in the writing process and show that writing is not a purely cognitive process taught from the outside in or the top down. Writing is, in fact, so influenced by the emotions of the writer that validating these emotions in turn validates the teaching methods that are inside-out or student-centered.

Defining, measuring, and evaluating the emotions writers feel is a bold undertaking. Brand's book (Number 13 in the Contributions to Psychology Series) is a research study. It has figures and tables, an appendix, an index, and a 310-item bibliography. Its 259 pages are not easy reading. The early chapters (1-4) affirm the validity of emotion in theory and in experience while defining the theoretical and historical relationship between emotion and written language. Chapters 5 and 6 set up the author's framework for measuring writers and designing the studies, the details of which are then reported in the next five chapters (7-11). Finally, 12, the last chapter, brings together findings, conclusions, and ramifications.

The Psychology of Writing concludes with Brand's concession that her research is just the beginning. There is much research yet to be done on skill, sponsorship, personality, style, motivation, engagement, arousal, reading and writing, instrumentation, and research design. Tracking the course emotions follow during a writing session and then singling out and identifying those emotions can lead to the deliberate use of emotion to aid in writing.

This book is a *must* for teachers who really want to reach their students, who want to teach the person, not the subject, who want to educate for life by tapping into the core of meaning, emotion.

Writer's Craft, Teacher's Art

Edited by Mimi Schwartz. Portsmouth: Boynton, 1991. 185 pp.

Reviewed by
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Exploring the connections between writing and the teaching of writing enables teachers to better understand their own personal writing process. Teachers are writers, and when we teach what we already know about writing, our enthusiasm spills over onto our students, eliciting positive attitudes towards writing. These are the central themes found in *Writer's Craft, Teacher's Art*. Mimi Schwartz has comprised a collection of personal essays which contain suggestions for the writer as well as the teacher of writing. Many chapters offer strategies for improving the writing process, such as clustering, reading journals, and reading workshops. Other chapters discuss the most effective ways to respond to students' compositions. This book is not designed for the classroom; it is not a textbook for students, but a guide for teachers. Since each chapter was written by a different author, a variety of suggestions on a wide range of topics are offered. The stories are informative and easy to read. *Writer's Craft, Teacher's Art* offers proof that how we write affects how we teach writing.

The book is divided into three major sections: strategies, insights, and dilemmas. In part 1, teachers tell how they prewrite, revise, and find a voice for their essays. Gabrielle Rico explains in her essay the science of chaos. Since we think in fragments, she says, we should first write in fragments through techniques such as clustering. Eavesdropping is the way Kim Stafford gathers information for writing. By listening to the conversations around her, she is able to fill her notebook with sincere and honest phrases that serve as a starting point for pre-writing. Mimi Schwartz describes two methods of revision and advises that we teach the method that we use most often in our own revisions.

Definitely the most moving chapter, written by Lynn Z. Bloom, gives an extremely personal account of a teaching experience which occurred in a graduate composition class. Instead of asking her students to compose a paper on "How I Write" as she usually did, she had them do a paper on "Why I Write." She wrote her own essay as an example for her students to follow. It included information about her parents and her marriage. The response was astounding! Several students shook her hand as they walked out of class. As Bloom says, "It was like leaving church." She believes that by sharing drafts with our students we will "find our voices, find our families, find ourselves."

In part 2, which discusses insights, Richard Marius points out that our comments on first drafts should be focused primarily on evidence, form, content, and logic. In our suggestions for revision we should steer away from negative comments which discourage students and leave them feeling that their work isn't worth revising. Michael Robertson advises that comments should be made while compositions are still in draft. He asks questions such as "What is your purpose in this essay?" and "What part are you unhappy with?" In part 2 you'll also find the chapter, "Taking What You Need, Giving What You Can." David Huddle believes that writers must take what they need from their teachers and forget the rest. His definition of a real writer is quite narrow. He says, "Only a small number of people can learn to be writers." Furthermore, he feels it is not his duty as a teacher to make writers of his students or to "tailor" his teaching to each individual student. Huddle's essay discusses the practical aspects of writing. Writing, reading, and criticism should be natural acts for real writers. At the end of the chapter, he lists seven elements of his "writer's code." These are values that he teaches his students. One example is "write for the good of the work—as opposed to writing for others or writing for self."

The last chapter, which is in part 3, deals with how to manage writer's block. Andrea W. Herrmann believes that sooner or later we all experience writer's block, and most of us have little rituals which help us get through it. She admits that she suffers from an eating / writing disorder. She eats when she can't write. Reading lots of books also helps calm her down enough for her to realize that she does have something worthy to say; and so she writes. Herrmann decided not to share this procedure with her class since most of her students are just learning to enjoy writing. She doesn't want to spoil their fun with pictures of the pain and frustrations of writer's block.

Writer's Craft, Teacher's Art is for anyone who is interested in writing or teaching writing. The use of personal experience to illustrate points makes each essay a model of good writing. Teachers will find innovative strategies to use in their composition classes, while writers will enjoy reading discussions on creative writing, authenticity of voice, and writer's block. Although the book as a whole is interesting and enjoyable, I found myself disagreeing with certain authors, in particular, Stafford and Huddle. Stafford admits that she is aware of the ethical issues involved in eavesdropping, but she is willing to take the risk because she believes in what she hears. As a parent, I teach my child that private conversations are just that—private. I wouldn't want someone borrowing any of my ideas without my permission. In Huddle's essay on the practical aspects of writing, he says that he doesn't "tailor" his teaching to each student. I think that everyone must develop a unique writing process which encourages progress. Not all students will have a problem with organization, for example. Individualized instruction allows a teacher to instruct each student where he or she needs the most help. Our job as writing teachers should include more than teaching strategies for pre-writing, writing, and rewriting; we must help each student find which writing practices work best.

Although most readers won't agree with everything written in this book, most will find something they can use in the classroom. But this book is not for reference. Its purpose is to show that a connection exists between how we write and how we teach. You'll either be convinced or not. There's no need to read this book twice. So if you want to borrow my copy, fine. I won't ask you to return it.

De Remnant Truth:
The Tales of Jake Mitchell and Robert Wilton Burton

Collected and with an Introduction by Kathryn Sport and Bert Hitchcock.
Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 1991. 247 pp.

Reviewed by
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Huck Finn would have called Jake Mitchell's tales "stretchers," but Jake claims they are the truth, "de remmunt truf," defined by editors Kathryn Sport and Bert Hitchcock as "the highest and only truth." Published serially in Montgomery and Birmingham newspapers from 1886 to 1891 by Robert Wilton Burton and now collected for the first time as *De Remnant Truth: The Tales of Jake Mitchell and Robert Wilton Burton*, these 36 stories introduce the reader to

Jake Mitchell, a gifted, illiterate raconteur and former slave from Marengo County, Alabama. Sometime after the Civil War, Jake moved to Auburn, which he considered far inferior to the world of Marengo County where he had lived before and after "freedom come out."

"Marengo Jake," the primary storyteller, speaks to the reader through a frame narrator, the educated white man Wilton Burton, who, with his formal, euphemistic language, sets the stage for Jake's "stretchers." He describes Jake as "a broken down aristocrat whose precious possession is the memory of a glorious past. Time cannot efface that memory; adversity cannot dim its splendor." It is Jake's dialect, however, that dominates the book. He describes himself as "de onlies' rale black nigger old Moster [Master] had." Unable to marry one of the "yaller gals" because he was "too black," he marries Mary Jane instead: "When folks can't git tater pooden dey has to take black ber' pie." Initially Jake's dialect is a barrier to amusement, but once decoded, it presents only a small impediment. "Jubous" is "dubious," "cuis" is "curious," "cose" is "course," "cyad" is "carried," and, amazingly, "minyu" is "manure."

Jake's repeated efforts to low-rate Auburn and elevate Marengo County provide the central theme—and much of the hyperbolic humor—of these sketches. Marengo County, unlike Auburn, had crawfish that could farm and market cotton, frogs big enough to sell as steers, and pumpkins spacious enough for a runaway slave to hide in until the corn crop he planted in that pumpkin broke through the fourth story and destroyed his yellow home. The dirt in Marengo County was especially remarkable. Jake recounts in "M'renger": "My old moster's garden, hit was dat rich de groun' ard eat up a nigger's foot if he went in dar bar' footed." When that rich earth of Marengo County got soaked with rain, there was trouble for human beings and beasts. Mr. Rumpless, a recurring character in the Marengo tales, got rich raising oversized mosquitoes to drain bogs.

Jake's elaborate yarns, some of them designed to trick little boys out of their Christmas goodies or their rabbits, make clear that Jake, the con artist, is also a consummate storyteller. He wants something, and, through his tall tales, he gets it. What he wants most of all is to let these people in Auburn realize that he is not "just a nigger" or a "common laborer"; he is a man who has known and worked for "quality" white people, and some of that "quality" has "slopped over" on him. Mr. Burton once called Jake a "sable prevaricator," but in Auburn, Jake *is* "somebody," an incomparable storyteller who mesmerizes even those who fear being taken in by his tales.

As the Introduction by Sport and Hitchcock points out, this collection raises the question of Wilton Burton's actual role in this interracial "literary collaboration" and his attitude toward Jake Mitchell. Burton claimed that he developed into "artistic form" the "crude material" of Jake's oral tales, but how faithful was Burton to the stories Jake told the Auburn people, how much did Burton "revise" them to mirror contemporary white Southern values, and to what extent did Burton realize that Jake was sometimes satirizing whites while wearing the "mask" of the innocuous black entertainer? In "Marengo Jake

Plays Another Trick on the Three Boys," for example, Jake tells about a dog who licks the mud off the boots of white folks until his tongue is worn out, but instead of being appreciated for all those years of boot-licking, the dog is rejected and physically abused for being useless and for ever thinking he was worthy of associating with "quality." Here Jake appears to be consciously, if somewhat uncharacteristically, exposing the exploitation of blacks by whites. Did Burton recognize the satire—and the discrepancy between the picture of Jake as covert social critic that emerges from this story and Burton's own characterization of Jake as "a typical old plantation negro"?

While Jake's tales will entertain the casual reader, it is probably in the classroom that this book will be most appreciated. Teachers of literature will find the Introduction quite valuable in tracing the literary lineage of these Alabama sketches from European tall tales and Old Southwest humor and, most importantly perhaps, in relating them to other stories from the late nineteenth century like Joel Chandler Harris' Uncle Remus tales. Teachers might want to compare the use of black folklore in *De Remnant Truth* with that in Charles Chesnutt's "The Goophered Grapevine" and in Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, published shortly before the "Jake" sketches began appearing in *The Montgomery Advertiser*. In the light of Sport and Hitchcock's discussion of Burton's role in this artistic collaboration, high school or university students could collect oral stories from family or community and then analyze any modifications that they, the recorders, want to make for "artistic" or "political" purposes. Students might also study interracial literary collaboration in works such as *Black Elk Speaks*, the autobiography of a Lakota Sioux holy man as told to John Neihardt.

This remarkable collection of newspaper articles from the late nineteenth century reintroduces to the world "Marengo Jake," an amusing and challenging voice from Alabama's past that makes a reader wonder how much more of the South's literary heritage waits to be recovered.

The English / Language Arts Handbook: Classroom Strategies for Teachers

By Stephen N. and Susan J. Tchudi. Portsmouth: Boynton, 1991. 222 pp.

Reviewed by
Misti Whitson McAdams
Pinson Elementary School, Pinson, Alabama

Stephen N. and Susan J. Tchudi's *The English / Language Arts Handbook: Classroom Strategies for Teachers* is divided into five sections. The first section is geared toward planning and preparing for instruction. The second, third, and fourth give practical suggestions for the teaching of reading, language arts, and English. The last deals with the various professional groups teachers must deal with: school boards, administrators, colleagues, and parents.

The first section begins by discussing the fundamental beliefs of the authors concerning the goals of English / language arts classrooms. One of these beliefs is that "Reading, writing, listening, and speaking are learned by doing, not principally by studying abstractions or completing exercises, and language is naturally interdisciplinary." This section also discusses the aims of the faculty as a group as well as the aims of individual teachers. It gives suggestions to aid teachers in setting the individual aims of their own classrooms. The authors then discuss ways in which teachers can plan for successful teaching. They discuss teaching by units or themes, ways to choose topics for study, means of individualizing and diversifying instruction, and methods of assessment and evaluation of student performance.

The second section, "Ideas for Teaching Literature and Reading," begins with a discussion of the two methods of reading instruction: phonics versus whole language. The authors feel that heavy phonetic instruction seems to lead to "strugglers," students who have very high decoding skills but low comprehension. They support the alternative to phonetics instruction: whole language. The authors state, "When nonreaders and nonwriters encounter print regularly, the systems mutually reinforce one another. Reading and writing are learned as wholes in a complex process that deserves the adjective 'miraculous.'" The authors then discuss inventive spelling, language experience, and working with less able readers and those who don't like to read, and they give suggestions on creating the reading-inviting classroom.

The third and fourth sections deal with teaching the composition of writing as well as the grammar of the English language. The authors discuss topics such as writing workshop, clustering, and publishing. They also discuss writing in the various genres, drama, conferences, and editing.

The last section, "The Profession of Teaching," discusses working with the school board, administrators, colleagues, parents, and members of the community. This section also gives specific suggestions to the new teacher and an address list of professional resources.

The views set forth in *The English / Language Arts Classroom* are in accord with those of the most well-known reading and writing specialists. Current educational theory in reading and writing instruction supports the authors' claim that students of all ages learn by doing as opposed to working solely in a workbook. The authors' suggestions for teaching strategies can be applied to the first-grade classroom as well as the senior-high English classroom.

ACTE to You

Peggy Swoger, President

The last four years of my work with the Alabama Council of Teachers of English have been rewarding and learning years for me. This spring the President's gavel will pass to Ann Boozer of Anniston, the first private-school secondary teacher to hold this office. We welcome the involvement of both public- and private-school English teachers from all over the state in the work of our NCTE affiliate organization. As is the nature of all voluntary organizations, we have enough work to keep hundreds of enthusiastic volunteers busy with promoting English language arts activities in Alabama. I would like to remind you of the many opportunities available to both new and veteran, both public and private teachers in this organization. We have need of:

- new people to serve on the Board of Directors
- a teacher who has access to word processing equipment to serve as *ACTE Newsletter* editor
- a politically active teacher to serve as SLATE representative
- other politically active teachers interested in censorship problems and in establishing a uniform and reasonable class size to serve on the SLATE committee
- new persons to serve on the Alabama Reading Incentive Council
- new persons to serve on various NCTE committees
- teachers interested in judging writing competitions and literary magazines
- teachers interested in presenting their best classroom practices and research at the fall conference
- teachers interested in writing for *Alabama English* and helping us maintain this journal

No organization functions well without the active, voluntary participation of its members and the dedicated leadership of its board of directors. Yes, all of us are busy and stretched to our limit most of the time; but somehow we find time for those volunteer activities that affect the future of our professional lives and the future of our students and children. I have met so many teachers through my participation in ACTE. We need to know each other and work together as a political force. How else can we answer public criticism about the quality of Alabama's teachers? How else can we influence public decisions?

Current Membership

The ACTE now has almost 500 members (if all of you have renewed for 1992!); in fact, we received an NCTE Membership Award as one of the three affiliates in the country to more than double its membership in 1991. Many thanks to Martha Wall, our hard-working Past-President and Membership Chair. We had a 60 percent increase.

The Future of *Alabama English*

Alabama English, now in its fourth year, has been praised by teachers from all grade levels in the state and within NCTE. Isabelle Thompson has spent uncountable hours getting this journal right. All of us who have written and rewritten articles under Isabelle's coaching know what a tremendous contribution she has made to professionalism in our state. Because of proration's effect on attendance at our fall conference, the Board of Directors approved a motion at our February meeting to publish only one issue of *Alabama English* this year. We hope to have sufficient funds to publish two issues in 1993.

Fall Conference

Although attendance was down at our fall conference held at AUM, the quality of the meeting itself was outstanding, judging from the positive comments and evaluations from those attending. Jesse Perry's speech on multi-cultural literature will be printed in a future issue of *Alabama English*. Next fall's conference will be held at the Donoho School in Anniston on October 9-10. If you would like to be considered for the program, send your proposal to Mary Ann Tighe at Troy State University.

1991 NCTE Convention

At the NCTE Convention in Seattle last November, the Board of Directors changed the procedure for electing Directors. In the past, the number of Directors was based on the number of members in an affiliate; this year, it will be based on the number of NCTE members in an affiliate. We urge our members to join NCTE. The journals and professional workshops and committee work will give you your money's worth. And, your NCTE membership will help the ACTE be adequately represented at the national level.

NCTE Censorship Guidelines

Also at the Seattle convention, Miles Myers presented two pieces of state legislation concerning class size and censorship. He urged affiliates to use this suggested legislation in whatever way would be beneficial to the respective states. Perhaps when our SLATE committee is organized, the ACTE will consider putting forth a legislative package, but for the moment, I will share NCTE's position on censorship as a guideline for you in your respective school districts. Perhaps the NCTE guideline will help you prevent a censorship confrontation.

> [The National Council of Teachers of English suggests] that each local school board adopt some version of the Right to Read procedure of the National Council of Teachers of English. This procedure [should] require that each school board (1) have a complaint form which parents can use to file a complaint about the

contents of a book which is required or optional reading in schools; and (2) have a complaint policy which provides for no change in optional or required books until a review has been completed and the local board has acted. The local book review committee [should] have at least 10 members and a majority of the members [should] be classroom teachers from the grades in which the book is used (1-2-3 or 4-5-6 or 7-8-9 or 10-11-12). The committee [should] have at least 20 school days to complete its review and to recommend to the local board whether or not to continue to list the book. Teachers [should] have the authority to decide whether a book is optional or required, and teachers may decide to list a book as an option for some students and as a requirement for others.

News about Members

Congratulations to Willie Mae Crews, Past-President of ACTE and Secondary Supervisor for Birmingham City Schools, in being elected to the NCTE Secondary Section. She is a wonderful representative for the state of Alabama!

Thank you for allowing me to serve two years as your Vice-President and Program Chair and two years as your President. I will continue to be involved.

Additional News from Anne M. Boozer our new President

We are justly proud of the quality of *Alabama English*. To keep the quality high and publish two issues a year, we are exploring the possibility of foundation and corporation funding. If any of you wish to make a contribution toward this goal—either by direct gift or by personal contact with a foundation or corporation—please call or write to:

Ann M. Boozer
1002 Forest Lane
Anniston, Alabama 36201
205-238-1854

ACTE is soliciting applicants for the Paul Scheid memorial scholarship in post-graduate study in English. Contact Steve McAlily at the State Department of Education for more information.

The ACTE Fall Conference will be held October 9-10, 1992 at:

Donoho School
2501 Henry Road
Anniston, Alabama 36201

This year's theme is "The Global Village: Strategies for Success in the Year 2000." Anyone who would like to present a workshop should call or write to:

Mary Ann Tighe
204 Merrily Drive
Troy, Alabama 36081
205-655-9274

ACTE members should watch their mail for more information about the Conference.

To Join the ACTE

To join the Alabama Council of Teachers of English and receive a subscription to *Alabama English* with your membership, send $10 and your name, school affiliation, and mailing address to:

Martha Wall
221 Kent Drive
Homewood, Alabama 35209

Today's date: ____________________

name: ____

home address: ____

city/state/zip: ____

home phone: ____

teaching / administrative position: ___________________________

grade (circle one):
- elementary
- jr. high school
- high school
- college

school: ____

ALABAMA ENGLISH

Spring & Fall 1993 • Volume 5 • Numbers 1 & 2

Double Issue

A Publication of the
Alabama Council of Teachers of English
in cooperation with Samford University.

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ALABAMA
ENGLISH

A Publication of the Alabama Council of Teachers of English
in cooperation with Samford University 's
Orlean Bullard Beeson School of Education
Howard College of Arts and Sciences
University Writing Programs
and the
Department of English

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Subscriptions: Subscription to *Alabama English* is included in the annual ACTE membership dues renewed each fall. To join the ACTE and receive a subscription to *Alabama English*, send your name, address, and school affiliation along with a check for $10.00 to Martha Wall, 221 Kent Drive, Homewood, Alabama 35209. *Alabama English* will be published twice a year, spring and fall.

Submissions: *Alabama English* welcomes manuscripts from 1250 to 4000 words long about current theory and practice in the teaching of reading, writing, and literature at any grade level; manuscripts approximately 1000 words long as "teaching tips"; short poems that are directly related to teaching and other professional experiences; and short essays approximately 250 words long about professional concerns. All manuscripts should be typed double space, and three copies should be submitted. For return of manuscript, enclose a self-addressed envelope with stamps attached by a paper clip. Send submissions to David W. Chapman, Editor, *Alabama English*, S. U. Box 2207, Samford University, Birmingham, Alabama 35229.

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Editor's Introduction

David W. Chapman

The child of a wealthy industrialist was once asked, "What is your greatest ambition in life?"

"Not to mess up," was his quick reply.

In taking over the editorship of *Alabama English*, I would have to say that one of my ambitions for the journal is simply "not to mess up." Isabelle Thompson has done a remarkable job in bringing *Alabama English* into the world and seeing it through those difficult first years. She has set a standard of quality and professionalism that I hope to maintain in the years to come. We have a state journal that compares favorably with any in the nation, and I am sure that reputation will continue to grow with the support of all our members.

In this issue the theme of diversity is considered in various ways. Jesse Perry reminds us that literature is not simply an academic subject, but equipment for life in a multi-ethnic society. He has also provided a bibliography that many teachers may want to make a part of their summer reading.

Even when dealing with canonical literature, new approaches can help students find personal meaning and a deeper appreciation of literary style. Mark Reynolds suggests various ways of using a reading journal to help students intellectually engage with Blake's poetry.

Ann Dobie provides insight into another "nontraditional" student, the adult learner who is returning to the classroom. In a survey of such students, Dobie notes the enthusiasm they bring to the classroom, but also warns of the unrealistic expectations that many of these students have.

Many Alabama teachers are now confronting students for whom English is a second language. Bill Lyons explains a practical approach to conferencing with such students and analyzes the results of using this method.

In our "Teaching Tips" section, Paula Brown explains the innovative teaching practices used by five Alabama teachers. These teachers have found methods that not only engage students, but simplify grading as well. (I imagine that last remark may have many teachers turning to this article first.)

Through the poetry of one of her students, Gwen McCorquodale makes an eloquent plea for letting student voices be heard in the classroom. Josh's poem "When I Think . . ." went from being heard by his classmates, to being featured in television and newspaper reports to being read aloud at the National Conference of Christians and Jews.

Most of you are probably aware of the difficult financial times in our schools. Limited funds at ACTE have made it necessary to again publish a double issue. We hope that next year we can return to semiannual publication.

The Power of Literature: Equipment for Life in a Multi-Ethnic Society

Jesse Perry

Jesse Perry was the keynote speaker at the 1991 fall meeting of ACTE. He is a curriculum specialist in English language arts for the San Diego City Schools, and is currently serving as president of the National Council of Teachers of English. He has published in English Journal *and* California English Journal *as well as contributing to* Tapping Potential: English and Language Arts for the Black Learner. *The following article was adapted from Perry's keynote address.*

> *Literature is equipment for life.*
> Kenneth Burke

The teaching and learning of literature can be a potent means of nourishing the democratic appreciation of all human beings. Through the study of literature we come to recognize that individual worth is not determined by any group label—ethnic, religious, social, or economic. Literature serves as a mirror for all the variety of human experience. Therefore, it is through books that we can gain an appreciation of people who live in another country or in another community or whose ethnic or cultural background may be different from our own.

Understanding the philosophical basis for the teaching of literature is essential if we are to make informed curricular decisions. When Charles Cooper, an English professor at the University of California, San Diego, met with a group of English teachers from the San Diego schools he raised this question: "Why should students read literature?" These teachers, relying on the practical experience they had gained from their interaction with students, generated the following questions:

- Literature gives pleasure. All students love stories. Some students even love words.

- Literature challenges and clarifies students' values. It forces them to examine their beliefs, attitudes, and values.

- Literature informs students about other cultures and times and about varieties of human experience.

- Literature provides students new ways of looking at familiar things as well as confirming the way they already look at things.

- Literature like all the arts, provides students an experience to share, a common experience to describe, savor, and debate—"Remember what happened in the story when. . . ?"

- Literature gives students language and forms to express their feelings.

- Literature is one of the arts. It has its own special characteristics, which students should experience and analyze.

- Literature provides students experience with a disinterested use of language, a use of language to amuse and inform without manipulating them for other ends.

- Reading American literature from all historical periods and from America's diverse cultural groups acquaints students with their American heritage.

- Reading literature fosters students' general reading development.

Where so easily as in the study of literature can students learn to see people as people? Novels and short stories help our students see others who are hoping, searching, and reaching for the solution to a particular, urgent human problem. Literature, by its very nature, can serve as a window on the world. What better vehicle is available, therefore, for having students experience the fact that all persons share in what we like to call the "human condition"?

Poetry plays an especially important role in exploring the human condition. Of all the genres of literature, poetry is taught the least frequently according to a study conducted at the Center for the Learning and Teaching of Literature, State University of New York, Albany. Yet, poetry as a vehicle for literary communication offers an invaluable opportunity for the expression and the discovery of self.

Dylan Thomas in his "Notes on the Art of Poetry" expresses the poet's ability to render vividly the human experience :

> I could never have dreamt that there were such going-on in the world between the covers of books, such sand-storms and ice blasts of world, such slashing of humbug, and humbug too, such staggering peace, such enormous laughter, such and so many blinding bright lights breaking across the just-awaking wits and splashing all over the pages in a million bits and pieces all of which were words, words, words, and each of which was alive forever in its own delight and glory and oddity and light.

Certainly, poetry should be given a significant place in a curriculum that addresses all of human experience.

After a variety of literary genres and works have been selected for study, the next question is how should this literature be taught. The following strategies have been recommended by the California English Language Arts Framework. Using these strategies, teachers can help students read "into," "through," and "beyond" literature.

- *Into* literature. Before reading or interacting with a literary work, teachers employ strategies to evoke the students' interest in the work and to connect them personally with it.

    Asking provocative questions about the work.

    Eliciting the students' related experiences and prior knowledge.

    Providing an overview or synopsis of the work.

    Offering biographical background about the author and other interesting historical and factual information about the piece.

    Doing an oral reading of a lively scene, showing a film, or using outside resources, such as practicing authors and other speakers.

    Beginning with familiar, simpler works which share common themes with complex work.

- *Through* literature. Students explore the work in depth.

    Reading and interacting with the work.

    Discussing the abstract ideas, concepts, and ideals encountered in the work.

    Generating their own interpretations and responses.

    Focusing on crucial questions.

    Engaging in dramatic presentations by assuming the personae of characters.

    Making predictions about what will occur in the piece.

    Recording their reactions in literature logs.

    Making journal entries of quotations of problems confronted by the characters.

    Designing artistic visualizations.

- *Beyond* literature. Interaction with the work is followed by activities that help students pull their thoughts together to reflect on how the work related to them and to society.

    Discussing and writing their reactions and insights.

    Reconsidering and reinterpreting their world views as a result of the work.

    Developing an illustration showing relationships among characters.

> Relating one piece of literature to another.
>
> Dramatizing the work.
>
> Reading parallel works among genres.
>
> Writing a new preface, a new ending, a change of scene, a script for readers' theatre, interpretive questions, summaries, imagined interviews, or sequels.

In "Teaching Literature: From Clerk to Explorer," Jayne De Lawter suggests that "teachers of literature are exploration leaders in that they are there to entice, excite, include and involve students in the study of literature through authentic or real language experiences in the classroom, thus leading students into the worlds of literature." Louise Rosenblatt's classic book *Literature as Exploration* gave impetus to the metaphor of teacher as explorer. She sets forth the premise that readers actively participate in an experience with language as they confront a literary work. She also emphasizes the contribution of readers to making meaning as they engage with the printed page.

The emphasis on exploration in De Lawter and Rosenblatt sets up an alternative model to the traditional approach to the study of literature. I do not wish to diminish the value of "studying" literature; nevertheless, it is my sincere wish that we provide opportunities for students to read and enjoy literature without the compulsion to explore in depth every obscure meaning and literary nuance. Students can never be expected to appreciate literature when they have never experienced its power. We must recognize, as well, that the power of literature is derived in part from its social implications. Literature is not simply a record of the past, but a continuing agent of social change.

According to Dwight Burton, literature plays an important part in developing an awareness of the universality of the human drama. In "A Way of Happening," Louise Rosenblatt believes that "Literature can compensate, thus, for the limitations of time and place and class and nation; can compensate, too, perhaps in some degree, for the limitations and the sorrows of the human condition. In "Literature and the Resumption of Self" Ed Farrell says literature might enable one to "see vistas never beheld before; encounter alien cultures; witness acts of both supreme courage and simpering cowardice, come to know compassion, integrity, cruelty, joy, insensitivity, loneliness, fear, and selfless love in which, paradoxically, self has most often been found, and most lucidly expressed; but as human behaviors which confirm our own humanity."

Literature not only makes us aware of the varieties of human experience, but it also creates a new understanding among people of different backgrounds and beliefs.

James Baldwin asserts: "Literature is indispensable to the world . . . the world changes according to the way people see it, and if you alter, even by a millimeter, the way a person looks at reality, then you can change it." Baldwin, along with others, believes in the power of literature to change the world. One of the world's most prolific writers, William Shakespeare expresses these sentiments.

> O that my tongue were in the
> thunder's mouth.
> Then with passion would I
> shake the world.

Contemporary poets, as did Shakespeare, "shake the world" through their writing. Listen now to a few voices:

FLAMINGO

I am one
whose thoughts
are more complex
than the thoughts
of those who live
in the same habitat
as I. I sit,
daily apart, and dream
of a bridge
I would like to cross
someday.

The pimps, their girls
and the hoods
stare in amazement,
hunch each other
and say, "Look at the punk.
There he goes."
They are unaware
that the word "punk"
has a variety of meanings.
I will rejoice
when the day comes
when I shall depart
from this host
of incipient squares.

I am the black Flamingo
I stand out among all the rest.
Since I am so rare
I'm set aside from all the others.

Reginald Lockett
African American

SMOKE

My brother, a closed sphere,
Round against noises, and shadows,
and me—
Nothing open but his nostrils,
Nothing moving but his heart—
Is so silent in his sleep—I speak in
mine.
But I am quiet in my waking, while
he speaks much.
And I would swallow smoke all the
evenings of my hours,
And commune with my clay Gods
That rest in rows against my walls
Like dolls, and give a prayer to
each.
Black lines of hair, scabs from
wounds, my nails,
I offer a part of myself to each so
each
Might eat.
I am pagan, strong in rituals,
And while my brother, a circle of
silence, sleeps with his,
I burn incense,
To my offended Gods . . .

Josef Rodriguez
Mexican-American

BEACH ALONG L STREET

Sea and sky are one color without
horizon.
A lonely seagull repeatedly
examines me
Asking suddenly who is more
leisurely.
"Well, either you or me" echoed I.
A strong wind, and the seagull can
no longer stand.
He has to ride the wind and go
Up and up, floating in the air.
How is it better than my freedom?

Chiang Yee
Asian-American

Hearing these voices, we are able to understand a reality quite different from our own. This empathy is the foundation of meaningful change in our society. Shelly said "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world"; student poetry has the power to "legislate" a new sense of brotherhood in our schools.

As these poems indicate, responding to literature often means engaging in the creative act of writing. When Charles Cooper met with the San Diego teachers, he not only asked "Why should students read literature?" but also"Why should students write about literature?" The group came up with the following reasons:

- Writing requires action. It ensures expression and thought. It ensures that all students make a response to their reading.

- Writing provides students a record of their ideas as they read a work and just as they finish it. This record can be very useful for later writing assignments.

- Writing can provide a focus and starting point for small group or class discussion.

- Writing permits students to test their understanding of literary or rhetorical concepts. It also enables them to express their response to reading and discussions.

- Writing about literature builds general writing skills.

- Writing can require students to look again and again at a text, ensuring rereading and reflection.

- Writing stories and poems lets students learn from the inside what literature is like as art.

- Writing enables students to discover connections between literature and life.

- Writing can help students discover what they think and feel about literature.

Therefore, reading and writing about literature are connecting links for helping students to discover and articulate meaning for themselves.

Twenty-five years after the deaths of Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and the Kennedys, our country finds itself once again faced with many crimes of hate perpetuated against various religious and ethnic groups. It seems as if that sensitivity once felt for others is slowly dissipating in many places across the country.

The teaching of literature can be a potent means of nourishing the democratic appreciation of each person unobscured by any group label—religious, ethnic/cultural, social, or economic. The fulfillment of these potentialities of the English language arts classroom is a responsibility more crucial than ever before. Louise Rosenblatt says: "The existence of habits of prejudiced feelings and behavior toward many groups in America is recognized as one of the vital threats to the health of our democracy. The ultimate cure will depend on the reshaping of many factors—social, political and economic." The preceding statement is from the foreword to a series of articles focusing on racism and religious prejudice and appearing in the June 1946 edition of *English Journal*. The remarks are still relevant today.

Books can play a unique part in fostering better understanding among all people especially if those books, selected genuinely and realistically, reflect the multi-cultural/multi-ethnic composition of that society. A multi-cultural program centered around literary experiences has the potential for clarifying moral imperatives and expanding social consciousness as readers explore the problems of racism, poverty, and cultural isolation. Literature can create a meaningful awareness of the social, psychological, economic, and cultural factors that are inherent in a pluralistic society. If the literature studied in our classrooms realistically reflects the multi-ethnic/multi-cultural populations in our country, then it is quite possible that students will begin to get a better vision of their own history and worth as they encounter those human experiences that are not necessarily alien to their own condition.

The themes in literature that focus on those aspects of life, such as self identity, social acceptance/rejection, ethnic and religious biases are important to all readers. Through reading Sone's *Nisei Daughter,* we experience the turmoil of a young female living in the Pacific Northwest during the Second World War. In Charles Johnson's *Middle Passage* , we find ourselves engrossed in the story of a newly freed slave who stows away on a vessel he later learns is a slave ship bound for Africa. The ship is destined to transport the last survivors of a legendary tribe from their homeland to the New World. The stowaway learns about the fellow sailors, the mysterious cargo transported through the Middle Passage and finally learns about himself. In Edmund Villarreal's *Pocho* we are caught up in the struggle of the protagonist to reconcile his Mexican and American roots. In *Souls of Black Folks* we learn from W.E.B. DuBois what it means to have two souls, "On the one hand, black people are the product of their African American heritage and culture. On the other hand, black people are the product of a Euro-American culture."

Two modern classics should be required reading of all students. N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*, a Pulitzer Prize novel, covers seven years (1945-1952) in the life of Abel, a World War II veteran, who returns to the reservation where his grandfather lives and where ancient traditions and beliefs are strong. The beauty of the book is in the mood, the haunting language, and the acutely intimate knowledge of personal reaction with which its pages are filled. Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* awakens us to the pain and demoralizing aspects of racism. Ellison's eloquent rendering of black experience in this novel forces us all to recognize that distorted or stereotyped visions of human worth by their very nature rob all persons of their true worth and potential.

Students should also explore the literary world of Zora Neal Hurston. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, published in 1937, examines the lustrous fabric of day-to-day life among rural African-American people. Her use of language is exquisite. For example, of sundown, she writes: "The sun was gone, but he had left his footprints in the sky." Similarly, Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* weaves a magical spell as she describes Milkman's quest for his own parentage.

In the sixth edition of *Reading Ladders for Human Relations*, edited by the late Eileen Tway of Ohio's Miami University, and in the fifth edition edited by Virginia Reid, NCTE Past President, and me, teachers can find many wonderful books related to ethnic, cultural, and religious groups. For example, Jimalee Burton, a Cherokee Indian, in *Indian Heritage, Indian Pride: Stories that Touched My Life*, shares memories of her heritage through her illustrations and stories. "Arrow to the Sun" by Gerald McDermott is a brilliantly illustrated tale from the Pueblo Indians that demonstrates reverence for the sun. Jeanne Wakatsuke Houston's *Farewell to Manzanar* is a wonderful story of one Japanese-American family's struggle for survival in the Manzanar Internment Camp during World War II. Another work of N. Scott Momaday's, *The Gourd Dancer*, contains rhymed and unrhymed poetry that invokes his Kiowa heritage. All of the poems can be enjoyed for their exquisite beauty and imagery.

Leslie Marmon Silko, author of "Ceremony," a story relating the first American experience says:

> I will tell you something
> about stories,
> (he said)
> They aren't just entertainment
> Don't be fooled.

they are all we have, you see,
all we have to fight off
illness and death . . .
So they try to destroy the stories
Let the stories be confused or
forgotten
They would like that
They would be happy
Because we would be defenseless
then.

The powerful language of these multi-ethnic, multi-cultural stories cited in this paper can serve as a vehicle for moving students from their small, personal view to an understanding and an appreciation of a broader view of others. Yes, such literature can inspire students to dance with their minds.

Some teachers may feel that they are not adequately prepared to teach multi-ethnic literature. Those teachers may wish to read such publications as Lerone Bennett's *Before the* Mayflower, *The Chinese Americans, Wounded Knee, A Hispanic Heritage,* and *Literature About Asians and Asian-Americans.* These multi-ethnic, multi-cultural collections of literature present a collage of the human experience. The models exhibited in this literature may very well contribute to effecting changes in how we perceive ourselves and others. Indeed, this literature might even serve as a vehicle for understanding others, while at the same time equipping us to live in a society that is becoming more multi-ethnic and multi-cultural. John Steinbeck captured the very essence of the majesty and power of those who teach when he wrote:

> She aroused us to the bookwaving discussions . . . our speculation ranged the world. She breathed curiosity into us so that we brought in facts of truths shielded in our hands like captured fireflies.
>
> When she went away . . . a sadness came over us but the light did not go out. She left her signature on us, the literature of the teacher who writes on minds. I have had many teachers who told me soon-forgotten facts but only three who created in me a new thing, a new attitude, a new hunger. I suppose that to a large extent I am the unsigned manuscript of that teacher. What deathless power lies in the hand of such a person.

NCTE's Position On The Teaching Of English: Assumptions and Practices

In the English/language arts curriculum, students should have guidance and frequent opportunities to:

1. read whole texts in their original versions, sharing written and oral meanings, not simply supplying workbook answers or responses to predetermined questions
2. read texts by authors of diverse backgrounds: e.g., ethnic, racial, gender, age
3. bring their own cultural values, languages, and knowledge to their classroom reading and writing
4. collaborate in writing many whole texts, not answers to exercises
5. read and write different kinds of texts for different readers: personal essays, informative writing, literature, and persuasive writing
6. learn grammar and usage by studying how their own language works in context
7. work with teachers and other students as a community of learners, observing their teachers as readers and writers
8. experience the interaction of reading, speaking, listening, and writing as reasoning and communicating acts
9. have their work assessed by many measures:
    - a. portfolios of their writing
    - b. extended oral and written responses to reading
    - c. essay tests with sufficient time for planning and revising, scored by a variety of means: holistic, primary trait, analytic
    - d. records of reading in class and outside class
    - e. one-to-one or small group conferences
10. encounter and critique a diversity of print materials—books, signs, posters, brochures, and so forth
11. have their own work shared, displayed, or published

A Selected Bibliography of Multi-Ethnic Literature

Jesse Perry

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NCTE Announces New Quarterly for K-6

A new publication from the National Council of Teachers of English is designed to encourage dialogue among elementary language arts teachers who want to enhance learning in their classrooms. Primary Voices K-6 responds to the concerns of teachers who question traditional approaches to teaching language arts in kindergarten through sixth grade and are seeking new answers. The premier issue is now off the press; future issues will be published in August, November, January, and April of each year.

Primary Voices K-6 helps readers envision how innovative teachers carry out new learning experiences in their classrooms. It offers the background and support a teacher needs to plan and carry out these experiences.
Each issue will be developed by a group of teachers with an interest in a particular educational concept, such as inquiry based instruction (the focus of the premier issue). The teachers explain the theory behind the concept and, in "Classroom portraits," show how they translate this concept into classroom interactions.

These teachers offer rich descriptions of what they do and the strategies behind their actions. They include classroom floor plans, daily schedules, and lists of resources. One example of applied inquiry learning is an "Explorers' Club," in which fifth-graders, singly and in groups, come up with "wonderful questions' from their reading and life experiences ('How did outer space come to be?"), then do research to answer them.

The teacher-authors also pose "lingering questions' about their practice. An example for inquiry learning: "How can the teacher be an inquirer? If we don't 'tell' anymore, how do we show what we know?" They also ponder where their new understandings might lead. "Our hope is to spark conversation among teachers,"said Karen Smith, NCTE associate executive director, who was in charge of developing the project. Primary Voices K-6 is available to NCTE members at $15 per year. Issues appear fall, winter, spring, and summer. Write Fulfillment Department, NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096.

Writing to Read Poetry: Teaching Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience*

Mark Reynolds

Because many of my two-year college students in sophomore English literature survey courses are neither skilled readers nor particularly fond of poetry, I have developed activities to spark their interest in reading and aid their comprehension. Drawing ideas from reader-response theory, I have found the most helpful activity over the past few years to be a reader's journal, a spiral notebook in which students write regularly in response to course reading.[1] However, rather than have students only react expressively in typical response journal fashion, I have them respond to text-specific exercises tailored to the work under consideration. Their journal writings are either prereading or postreading ones for most of the assigned works in the Norton Anthology of English Literature, the course text.

Many and varied, the writing activities are done both in class and out. Most are short spontaneous exercises written quickly before or after a poem is discussed. Sometimes students share their responses in class, sometimes not. While useful as supplemental aids, many exercises can become formal writing assignments or the basis for detailed explications of readings. Whether or not the writings are discussed in class, the results often surface at some point, and their effect has been to increase significantly student participation and to improve the overall quality of the students' responses to literature.[2] This essay illustrates a range of response journal exercises for use with William Blake's Songs of Innocence and of Experience, poems commonly assigned in English literature surveys. I select from among these activities depending on the amount of time I devote to Blake during any one term.[3]

With Songs, I have designed exercises both for the whole collection and for individual poems. It seems essential for students to understand early the many possible meanings of the terms "innocence" and "experience." Therefore, before assigning Songs, I explore with students their initial understanding of these terms by asking them to define them in their journals. Then I ask them to apply the reporter's formula—who? what? where? why? how?—to the terms to generate some concrete examples. Students usually often come up with examples close to those in Songs: childhood reminiscences, childhood fears, disillusionments, social ills. They often equate "innocence" with "lack of knowledge" and "experience" with "knowledge," making it easier for them to see a major distinction between many poems in the two collections.

Other successful overview assignments have students make two quick lists for all associations they have with the terms "childhood" and "adulthood." The lists pave the way for discussing the dichotomy between Blake's two states. Asking students to list ten things they believe in and ten things they have doubts about also helps them understand the disparity between the two worlds Blake explores, as does having them list things which are not as they appear on the surface, situations where appearances belie reality. Providing examples helps them along, i.e., the beauty of the Venus flytrap versus the reality of its character, the gingerbread house in the Hansel and Gretel fairy tale, the wolf dressed as the grandmother in "Little Red Riding Hood," the friend known for false flattery or exaggeration. These activities can be used to initiate class discussion of the two psychological states Blake describes with their shifting and multiple perspectives.

Because Songs of Innocence contains characteristics typical of children's poetry, even though Blake never intended it as such, students copy into their journals one or two children's poems that stand out from their childhoods. We discuss these in class, with examples ranging from "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" to parts of The Song of Hiawatha. It is often good for students to compare one of their poems to one of Blake's innocence songs. They usually perceive the similarities and deduce the characteristics of all children's poetry, from subject matter (lambs, childhood activities) to poetic technique (repetition, simple language), making them more receptive to Blake's "happy songs/Every child may joy to hear."

To prepare students for discussing how the world of experience sometimes intrudes into the world of innocence in Blake's poems, I ask them to recall occasions from their childhoods when "experience" episodes intruded into their worlds of "innocence." In their journal writings, they remember the death of a pet, tears over a broken toy, the cruelty of a playmate, conflicts with an older brother or sister, or even their parents' divorce. Most see how these disappointments and introductions to disillusionment carry over into adulthood, and then recognize the subtle ways Blake gives hints of experience in some innocence songs.

Here are a few unedited student journal accounts of "experience in innocence":

> I remember when I was growing up in my neighborhood I was the youngest kid. Usually the older kids would let me play softball or basketball or whatever with them. But I remember some times when they wouldn't let me play because I was too little, or when I arrived late and sides had already been chosen and I was told to get lost. I remember once or twice running home to my mother crying because I had been "rejected." I didn't know it at the time but I guess I was learning as an 8 yr. old something about what real life is all about. One is not always allowed to play whenever or with whoever one wants.
>
> When I was a little girl between nine and eleven I put on a lot of weight and got very fat. Most of the time I was happy and had fun playing with the other children at school. However, when a new girl moved to town and started going to my school things changed. One day on the playground she started calling me "fatty" and "butterball." Then the other children started calling me "fat" names too. For the first time in my life I learned how cruel people can be. I learned that people who look different can be ridiculed. I remain to this day as a twenty-eight year old overly sensitive about my weight.
>
> My parents got a divorce when I was 7. They had terrible fights and yelled all the time in front of us kids. It was a nightmare. For a while we all lived with my grandparents, then my brothers went to live with my dad, I stayed with my mom. Life slapped me in the face early but I think I will be all right.

Perhaps the best Blake song to illustrate "experience in innocence" is "The Chimney Sweeper" of Innocence. Here students can be led to discuss what is wrong with the whole chimney sweep predicament when the only hope the child has for a release from a life of cleaning chimneys is death. Students come up with contemporary child abuse stories that parallel the abuse endured by the sweeps of Blake's day. I tell them, too, about the abuse of children in the sugar cane fields of Haiti and the gold mines of Peru, only two places where forced child labor is common today.

To move from consideration of the two collections as a whole to individual songs, I often assign each student a particular poem to become an expert on. Students must read their poem several times, look up unfamiliar words, and write a prose summary in their journals. When there are companion poems, we examine both in class, letting students see further the contrast between innocence and experience. I also ask students to read their prose summaries to the class and encourage class discussions. Since the classes often contain several adult students, I sometimes alternate songs, giving the 18-20 year olds the innocence poems and the older students the experience ones. This activity works especially well with the companion poems and helps illustrate the youth versus age contrast reflected in poems such as the two nurses' songs.

Following the class discussion of individual poems, I sometimes ask students to react in a journal writing to whatever interests them from the discussion. Or I may leave the final 5-10 minutes at the end of class for journal writings based on the entire day's discussion. A freewriting session here often allows students to respond spontaneously to whatever has aroused their interests.

To help students gain an understanding of Blake's illuminations, I use several assignments. Before showing them Blake's illustrations, I may have them copy a song they like into their journals and illustrate it on the same page, using the remaining available margins as Blake did. For those who resist, claiming they cannot draw, I offer the option of writing instructions to an artist explaining how the poem should be illustrated. At other times, students study one of Blake's illuminated songs and write a commentary on how Blake's illustration complements the poem. Another interesting journal exercise is to show students an illumination with the poem text covered. They study the art, describe it in their journals, then write on what they think Blake's accompanying poem might be about. Sometimes students' "predictions" are surprisingly close to Blake's original. Always students are interested in seeing Blake's text and comparing it to the illumination. Having students scrutinize an illuminated poem or try an artistic interpretation themselves helps them realize the holistic nature of the words and the art in communicating the poem's meaning. They then pay much more attention to the illuminated texts I pass around for them to see.

The work on the illuminations is one of the areas that can lead to a longer or more formal writing assignment. Students can be asked to select companion poems from the two collections, for example, "Infant Joy" and "Infant Sorrow," and write a formal interpretation of the two poems demonstrating particularly how the illustrations contribute to their explication. For an even longer assignment, students can do research on the illuminated verse and write a documented paper about Blake's artistic technique. More sophisticated students might tackle the problems associated with the variations in the illuminations from one edition of Songs to another.

As another journal activity, students can also imitate one of Blake's songs and compose an original poem or model companion poems. Modeling requires a close reading of the original and often yields good poems students are willing to share with the class. Some of the best have been parodies such as "Freshman Joy"/ "Freshman Sorrow," imitating "Infant Joy"/ "Infant Sorrow" or "The Butterfly"/ "The Alligator" based on "The Lamb" and "The Tyger."

In addition to these exercises, I use a variety of assignments with specific poems. Here again, students give quick journal responses to specific topics—writing no longer than five minutes. For example, with "Introduction" to Innocence, I ask for an explanation of "rural pen," or have students list examples of "happy songs/Every child may joy to hear." For "The Lamb," I ask why Blake chose a lamb or what other animals he might have chosen (this works well for "The Tyger," too). As an out-of-class assignment for "The Divine Image" and "The Human Abstract," students look up in a dictionary and define briefly the terms "mercy," "pity," "peace," "love," "cruelty,""selfishness," "hypocrisy," then provide concrete examples of each. For the chimney sweep poems and the "Holy Thursday" poems, before we discuss the poems in class, one student gives a brief oral report on chimney sweeps and another reports on the charity schools in Blake's day. After discussion, students react in their journal both to the discussion and to the question "How are children mistreated today?"

Activities related to these two poems can also lead to more formal papers. Students can do research on the chimney sweeps or the charity schools of Blake's time for longer writing assignments. Other social problems of the time can also be the focus of longer papers, especially those mentioned in "London." It is often the journal exercises that spark student interest in such topics, making them willing to do research or write more extensively.

For "Infant Joy" and "Infant Sorrow," I ask for a spontaneous journal list of all the good things associated with the birth of a child and another list of all the bad things. For the "Nurse's Songs," students describe a time when as children they were allowed to stay out late and continue playing and a time when they were not allowed to do so. Another time, they explore in their journals why they themselves might even at their age envy a group of children outside playing at that very moment.

For "London," students list concrete examples from their experience of faces with 'marks of weakness, marks of woe"; of infants' "cries of fear"; of "mind-forg'd manacles," and of other social problems suggested by the poem. They marvel that many of the same social woes from Blake's time still exist today. Recent class discussions have considered the homeless, the problem of AIDS, drug abuse, and the bombing of abortion clinics—examples of current social problems students wrote about in their journals. Students were able also to point out the similarities between the prostitutes of Blake's day whose venereal diseases caused blindness in their babies ("How the youthful Harlot's curse/Blasts the new-born Infant's tear") and today's prostitutes whose cocaine use produces crack babies.

For "A Poison Tree," students describe in their journals concrete examples they have experienced of repressed anger, resentment, or the desire for revenge. For "The Tyger," a student gives an oral report on tigers, then the students react in their journals to the report and relate it to Blake's poem. The Stanley Breeden article in the December 1984 National Geographic is an excellent source for information on tigers; good, too, is the documentary film, The Land of the Tiger, based on the same article.

Another journal exercise that works well is dialoging, having students express the same sentiments of one or more of the songs through characters' dialog: they can let the two nurses of Innocence and Experience converse; have Clod and Pebble debate; the chimney sweeps talk to the charity school children; Infant Joy and Infant Sorrow describe their initial views of the world; or Sick Rose speak with Worm. Such dialog exercises force students to read the poems thoughtfully as they employ their imaginations both to incorporate the realm of the poem and to expand upon it.

Collectively, exercises such as these enhance students' comprehension and appreciation of the complexities of Blake's poems. They require close interaction with a song and at the same time force students to probe their own worlds of innocence and experience through written responses. Students are more motivated to read and required to think more deeply about their reading. Moreover, they know they must read assignments before class in order to complete in-class exercises. Often the prereading exercises themselves are sufficient motivators for students to want to read course assignments willingly. These journal writings focused on specific elements within texts and on the lives of the readers force an active encounter with literature that few students have experienced, yielding more lively and more interesting classes.

Notes

[1] The use of journals in literature courses has become rather widespread. For discussions of journal use see especially Toby Fulwiler, ed., The Journal Book. Portsmouth: Heinemann-Boynton/Cook, 1987; and the essays in Language Connections: Writing and Reading across the Curriculum. Toby Fulwiler and Art Young, eds. Urbana: NCTE, 1982.

[2] For discussions of "writing to learn," see Janet Emig, "Writing as a Mode of Learning." College Composition and Communication 28 (1977): 122-28; Anne J. Hetherington, "Writing to Learn: Writing Across the Disciplines." College English 43 (April 1981): 379-87; Anne Ruggles Gere, Roots in the Sawdust: Writing to Learn Across the Disciplines. Urbana: NCTE, 1885; and Toby Fulwiler and Art Young, eds. Programs That Work. Portsmouth: Heinemann-Boynton/Cook, 1990.

[3] Elsewhere I have discussed similar activities with other poets. See "Pre and Postreading Activities for Selected Wordsworth Poems." In Approaches to Teaching Wordsworth's Poetry. Ed. Spencer Hall. MLA, 1986; "Teaching the Metaphysical Poets in a Two-Year College." In Approaches to Teaching the Metaphysicals. Ed. Sidney Gottlieb. MLA, 1990; and ":Using a Reader's Journal to Teach Byron's poetry." In Approaches to Teaching Byron's Poetry. Ed. Frederick W. Shilstone. MLA, 1991.

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Back to School: Adults in the Freshman Writing Class

Ann B. Dobie

Every ten years or so, filmmakers seem to discover what college teachers have known for some time now: that older students, intent on developing personal interests or charting new careers, enter college with an agenda different from that of the usual eighteen-year-old freshman. Several decades ago, Loretta Young donned the then-mandatory beanie in Mother Was a Freshman. Some years later Julie Walters discovered Shakespeare, and Michael Caine, in Educating Rita. Even Rodney Dangerfield delighted his fans when he went Back to School, on film, a couple of summers ago. In the movie version, the mixture of youth and age, innocence and experience, usually results in comedy based on generational differences and dislocations.

The real thing, however, even with its own moments of irony and humor, is generally a more serious affair. Those of us who find older students seated in our classrooms alongside the recent high school graduates cannot help but wonder about their needs and goals. What do students over the age of twenty-five want and expect and need when they come to college for the first time, or when they begin again—at the beginning?

Looking for answers, I discovered that most of what we know about this group of students is anecdotal, a compilation of general impressions and good stories accumulated over the years. A few studies of older freshmen had been reported, but they tended to concentrate either on general educational problems of the group (Knowles); on specific aspects of their experience, such as writing anxiety (Thompson); or on subgroups, such as reentry women in two-year institutions (Greenwood). I could find little firm data about the writing interests, experiences, and needs that older students are likely to bring to the freshman composition class of a large, heterogeneous university. What do we know about their attitudes towards school or towards the act of writing? How do they feel about their chances for success? What do they expect from the instructor? Why have they enrolled in the university? In Patricia Connors' 1982 study comparing the attitudes of older students and traditional freshmen, she concludes that "composition teachers must be ready to adapt their courses to meet the needs of the returning or older students who comprise an increasingly larger percentage of our composition courses" (266), and major publishing houses are currently exploring the market for freshman texts tailored to the interests of older freshman. But how are we to alter our courses and textbooks to meet their needs and interests until we know them better?

To answer some of the questions I had about older students, I carried out a semester-long study that began with twenty-eight adult students (over twenty-five years of age) and ended with twenty-two, six dropping out of the course or the university during the semester. Of those who finished the term, half were entering the university as first-time freshmen, the rest returning to college after an absence of five or more years. (Two had graduated from high school ten years before, and one eleven years earlier. Both were in college for the first time.) As an average, they had not been in a formal academic situation for almost nine years. They were men and women with scores in the low, middle, and high range of the English portion of the ACT who were registered for developmental English, Freshman composition, and an introductory honors course. Almost half of them were responsible for managing a household with children, and a third of them held jobs, five of them working between 20-40 hours per week. In short, they were selected to represent, as much as possible, a cross section of the older students likely to be found in freshman English courses at a large but not highly selective university.

I sought information about the older students in a variety of ways at different times in the semester. Much of what I learned came from four questionnaires filled out by the students and the written self-analyses I asked them to provide at the end of the course. In addition, I discovered some information on my own by observing their classes, and instructors provided their point of view in personal interviews with me. Due to the relatively small number of students involved, the statistical aspects of the study probably provide less insight than the personal observations that were made. Nevertheless, the very human stories derived from those observations can help instructors understand the situation of the older students who are increasingly enrolled in their classes.

The inescapable conclusion I reached was that the initial stage of the academic endeavor is the most difficult one for these students. It is probably the stage most critical to their success. The opening weeks of a semester present them with personal, organizational, and academic problems that can lead to their growth or to their failure. This discussion is a look at what they are thinking and feeling at that period; it is also a consideration of what the composition instructor can do to help make their grand adventure a success.

Before seeking information about the writing experiences and attitudes of older students, I attempted to find out something about their academic expectations. The answers to a questionnaire distributed at the beginning of the term verified my supposition that their reasons for entering or returning to college were serious ones. Admiring people who had college degrees, almost all of these students planned to attend long enough to earn one for themselves. When asked why they had decided to enroll, they cited the desire to pursue specific intellectual interests, to acquire skills leading to employment, and to come to know themselves better. They rejected the idea that they were attending college to try something new, to have something to do, to find out what to do with their lives, or simply to have fun. Virginia's comment was typical of the group. She said: "I consider myself to be ambitious. I've wanted to attend college for a long time, and now that I'm here, I hope to make good grades." Most of them wanted to make A's and B's; only four felt they would be satisfied with mostly C's. All expected to work hard.

Going back to school was not without its problems for this group of students. Although all but two said they were taking up their studies with the approval and encouragement of family and friends, 64% of them admitted that going to college was a financial strain and that it required social, family or other sacrifices.

Despite the problems, the adult students expressed a high degree of confidence about their return to formal schooling. As Patrick put it: "Coming back to college is right for me now. I didn't do very well when I was here before, but I was too young then to know what I wanted—except for a good time." Like Patrick, most of the older students had firm reasons for their positive expectations, explaining that they had become more knowledgeable, organized, and motivated than when they were last in school. All felt that they had greater self understanding and more clearly defined goals now. As a result, they expected to enjoy being in school again. Although a fourth of the students were anxious about doing well in college courses, most did not consider themselves to be less capable of success than recent high school graduates or to lack study skills because of being out of school for a number of years.

An interesting discrepancy appears at this point, inviting additional research. That is, the descriptions of student attitudes provided by instructors were somewhat less positive than those given by the students themselves. The teachers were more likely to characterize their older students as anxious and insecure, causing them to work harder, or overly confident, creating a patronizing attitude towards both teacher and other students. Claudia Greenwood offers some insight into this paradox, noting in her study of reentry women students that "women who manifested profound fear of the experience they were entering had to have a strong sense of their ability to succeed at it—or they logically would not have taken the risk" (135). Questions such as "How does the age of the instructor affect the attitude of the student?" and "How much posturing takes place because older students feel they are expected to exhibit confidence? and "Are men more confident than women?" remain to be answered.

Turning from an examination of the general academic expectations of older freshmen to a more specific look at their writing histories and interests, I discovered, with some disappointment but not much surprise, that writing did not hold a very important place in their lives. (See Figure 1 in the Appendix). Like their younger classmates, most of them admitted writing only when an occasion required it; even then, only thirteen claimed to be moderately dutiful about composing even thank-you notes. As Sylvia commented: "When I want to get in touch with family or friends who live out of town, I just pick up the phone." As a matter of fact, half of the group said that they seldom or almost never wrote instead of calling. Almost 78% said that they would rather talk to someone than write to them.

The idea of writing for oneself was not particularly popular either. Half stated that on their own they seldom or never did any composing, although three-quarters of them admitted that they wrote for themselves (in journals or diaries) at least twice a month. Few, only four, expressed strong interest in composing poems, short stories and plays, leaving the overwhelming majority aligned with traditional freshmen students, who admit that they are rarely or only sometimes interested in doing so. Some of the older students seemed aware that writing could be used as a study technique, but hardly anyone considered it a pleasurable way to spend leisure time. Eighteen preferred television over writing, and seventeen preferred being with friends.

These responses become more interesting (see Figure 2) upon learning that more than half the students agreed that writing helps them find out what they think, and even more of them acknowledged that writing helps express their feelings. They seemed to be aware of what writing can do for them, but reluctant to take advantage of what it offers.

These somewhat disheartening answers are not surprising considering that the past experiences of these students have not made it necessary to do much writing. (See Figure 3.) Only one wrote for a school newspaper or yearbook in high school. Less than half had had occasional need to write in connection with volunteer work in the community. Only twelve said that they had ever composed letters to the newspaper or to political figures. The only area of their lives in which writing figured often was the management of their home or business, 86% of them noting that in this context they at least made lists or issued memos. Charles pointed out that he wrote checks.

To test my emerging notion that the attitudes of these students towards writing could, like those of many of the others in their classes, at best be described as one of indifference, I decided to ask more direct questions as to how they felt about it. (See Figure 4.) Did they like to write? Their responses formed a bell curve: one answered "almost always," four "often," eleven "sometimes," five "seldom," and one "almost never." On being pressed for more specific answers, only one admitted enjoying taking minutes at group meetings. and four to taking notes voluntarily at lectures and meetings outside of school.

Despite the limited experiences they reported having had with writing, they generally felt themselves to be adequate, if not superior writers. Again their responses formed a curve: one considered himself or herself almost always competent, one almost never, the rest falling bell-like between the two extremes. Part of the problem for the uncertain ones seemed to lie in their doubts about grammar. Five expressed being insecure about grammar almost always, two often, eleven at least sometimes. An even higher number expressed the feeling that they would benefit from studying grammar. Punctuation provided another source of insecurity, with seventeen feeling unsure about its use at least sometimes.

Like many students at the beginning of a semester, this group expressed positive attitudes towards what a composition course had to offer them and how they would perform in it. (See Figure 5.) All expected, with varying degrees of intensity, to enjoy it. Only four confessed to taking it only or mostly because it was a requirement. Part of their affirmation stemmed no doubt from agreement with an opinion expressed by Lil, who wrote: "I think this course will help me to pass my other courses, and when I finish school it will help me get a job." However, only fifteen believed that writing skills are generally necessary for success. This minor contradiction may reflect the belief they share with many freshmen that a college degree confers vast advantages on a job-seeker and the recognition that passing Freshmen English is a requirement for the degree. Their self-confidence also contributed to their positive expectations. Confirming the findings of Merle Thompson, whose study revealed older students to have lower than the average levels of general anxiety found in their younger classmates in freshman composition, both males and females showing significant reduction over the course of the semester (4), thirteen in this study at the outset felt strongly certain of their chances for success in the course, and only seven were seriously anxious about taking it. Like the women described by Claudia Greenwood, "they entered the classroom anxious but hopeful, underprepared but willing to address their deficiencies" (136). All seemed to agree with Barbara, who wrote: "I'm really looking forward to getting better at writing." Eighteen of them said they had enrolled in the course with strong anticipation.

Another reason they looked forward to the course may have been their belief that on their own they were not likely to improve their writing. (See Figure 6.) Only six admitted that they had attempted to do so. In general they held that people learn most about English at school, only four expressing the opinion that most language learning takes place in the home. They also recognized that a reader other than the self made them more careful writers. Although eight did not object to going back at a later date to re-read what they had written, half reported that when writing for someone else, they often or almost always revised what they had written.

Given the somewhat confusing information that the older students infrequently engaged in writing and were rarely enthusiastic about it, but considered themselves relatively competent writers who were looking forward to improving their skills, I began to wonder what they considered good writing to be. (See Figure 7.) I asked them, in a variety of ways. Although only six asserted the mechanical aspects of writing (punctuation, spelling and such) to be more important than the subject matter and originality, in answer to other questions, the majority expressed the opinion that good writing conforms to clearly defined rules of usage and mechanics, that "correctness" is always important, that an educated person should be able to identify the parts of speech in a sentence, and that diagramming sentences is important in learning to write. On the other hand, a surprising seventeen agreed the deviation from standard English usage is sometimes effective.

The emerging profile was not a

clear one. These twenty-two older students who had enrolled with the serious intent of pursuing their education, who expressed confidence in knowing who they were and what they were about appeared in some ways to be just as naive as the average eighteen-year-old freshman, though the nature of their naivete was different. They were unrealistic about their own situations, about what college could do for them, and about what a writing class would ask of them.

For example, almost all hoped to earn a degree, but they were taking, on average, only ten hours of course work. Graduation is possible at that rate of study, but the frustration of almost doubling the number of semesters of enrollment promises to be debilitating, especially for students who are attending classes under financial strain and personal sacrifice. Their expressed commitment to work hard on their studies despite problems and responsibilities of jobs, family, and health is admirable, but it should not obscure the fact that the strongest resolve can weaken with time.

The rewards they expected a college education to bring were not completely realistic either. A degree does not automatically confer a profession, wealth, and social status, but most of the group was confident it would at least take them closer to those goals. On the other hand, several students found rewards that erred in the other direction by being too short term. Those who had long desired to attend college had a tendency to see their enrollment as an end, the fulfillment of a goal, instead of the beginning that it should be.

Their unexamined enthusiasm extended to their composition course. Despite the fact that they had heretofore exhibited little interest in or the need for writing, and not much for reading, they expected to enjoy working to improve their literacy skills. Although they seldom wrote for fun, learning, or communication, as they began the semester, they viewed themselves as competent, capable, hard-working individuals who would find pleasure and profit in a composition course. What they liked to do and what they expected to enjoy doing were not the same, but they failed to recognize the discrepancy.

They were at best short-sighted about why they were taking the course. Citing the desire to improve their writing skills so that they could do well in other courses and improve their chances of being employed, they indicated little use of writing to find out what they thought, express their feelings, solve problems, or analyze situations. They seemed to expect the instructor to help them clean up their grammar so that their writing would achieve a higher degree of correctness and they could move into better paying, more socially approved jobs. With the commas in all the right places, their lives would improve. Despite their resolutions to work hard, the responsibility was primarily that of the school and the instructor, who could give them the formulas for getting where they wanted to go.

Should an instructor be concerned about the contradictions between such idealistic views and life as it is? After all, a sense of optimism accompanies most students at the outset of a term, especially when they enter a new school or level of education.

The study suggests that the answer is yes: instructors should be especially concerned with the attitudes of older students in early stages of their college experience because their naivete can have more serious consequences than that of their younger freshmen classmates. It is potentially more hurtful because it can jeopardize their success, and failure is more damaging to the lives of older students. They have waited longer for the chance to attend college. Their jobs have impressed on them the need for a degree. They have made compromises and sacrifices to attend. Their role models have been bore clearly defined. Thus they arrive with higher expectations, with a heavier investment in doing well. Failure means reevaluating fundamental self-concepts, mostly from a negative point of view.

What can composition instructors do to enhance adult students' chances of success? We can begin by providing experiences that will preserve the enthusiasm and resolve that plays such a large part in older students' views of attending college. When problems arise, that determination and desire can go far to carry them beyond discouragement and frustration. As Richard Courage suggests we can build a supportive classroom atmosphere in which instructors act as facilitators who respect older students' experience and understand their pragmatic orientation (3). Peggy Davis points out the value of giving pep talks to emphasize that they are building on what they already know, writing notes of praise to them, and even making assignments that make them feel important, such as composing letters to congressmen and newspapers (5). In short, we can, especially in the early weeks of the course, minimize risk in an effort to reassure the uncertain and reinforce the committed.

Modern pedagogical strategies are particularly helpful with older students. Collaborative learning, peer editing, and reading and response groups help to break down the invisible barriers between age groups and thereby increase the sense of acceptance felt by the nontraditional freshmen. They not only facilitate interaction among students, but they also improve relationships between teacher and students. Responsible and eager, adult students react well when instructors are more open and less authoritarian than expected. Adult freshmen are comfortable taking over when the instructor lets go the power traditionally associated with standing behind the lectern.

The teacher-student relationship is particularly important with older writing students because composition instructors are often regarded with admiration for seeming to have accomplished what the older students so deeply desire to do. Consequently, there is a rich opportunity to establish a relationship of trust, trust that can be made evident by the teacher's being flexible in accepting late papers or in excusing absences from class (Pomerenke and Mink 207), having a realistic understanding of outside (non-classroom) demands and using teaching strategies other than lectures (Siegel 55), or by giving individual attention and accepting a variety of ways to carry out assignments. Such acts have the power to reduce students' initial fears and encourage their efforts; strong medicine for the able but fearful.

More specifically, instructors can help older students bring their optimism into line with reality by providing them with ways to find where and how the two intersect. If writing is a means of self-discovery, problem solving, and situation analysis, it is an appropriate tool for adult students to use in defining their purposes and their capabilities—i.e., themselves. In the first questionnaire of this study, the students indicated that they expected to draw subjects for their writing from their own experiences, and it is that material that can provide effective means of self-questioning. Although it is ultimately the student who does the digging and makes the discoveries, the instructor must set up situations and make assignments that offer students the opportunity to connect their academic and "real life" experiences. If the instructor provides topics for writing, for example, they should be designed to encourage reflective and critical thinking: for example, "Recount an occasion on which you had to make a serious decision. Explain your choice and why you made it, evaluating it in light of its consequences." Simple narrative may be the beginning, but finding causes, making comparisons, asking how experiences fit together are, in the long run, the acts that lead to meaning.

Writing teachers can also introduce older students to a variety of writing tasks, expanding their repertoire beyond lists and memos (and check writing), beyond even essay examinations and business letters. Instructors can demonstrate that writing is a way to spend leisure time, to study, to find out what one thinks and feels. We can set up situations in which older students find out for themselves that writing and speaking are different kinds of communication. They can be asked to engage in an analysis of those differences so that they can come to know what writing offers them. In journals and with other students they can discuss their writing problems and processes, making discoveries about their writing and about themselves.

Finally, at some point the issue of "what is good writing?" needs to be addressed. Older students, anxious to do the right thing, need to be pushed beyond surface correctness as the measure of what is good. Presumable their respect for "grammar, " which seems to cover everything from punctuation to parsing comes from years of teacher reinforcement. Now it is time, past time, that they learn that not all correct writing is good writing and not all effective writing is correct. I do not advocate throwing away all conventions of standard usage, but considerations of audience, voice, and occasion, of which these older students seemed to be largely unaware at the beginning of the course, can vastly enlarge their definitions of what is good.

The value of this study and its conclusions, then, is not that it reveals radically new discoveries, but that it verifies what many of us have thought all along. The older students who come to college for the first time or return after a long absence enrich our classes by their commitment, background, and eagerness. Although their hopes sometimes outweigh their understanding of what college can do for them and why they are taking freshman composition, they are willing to encounter new ideas and test them in the light of past experience. They are able to formulate new conclusions, not always invalidating the old, but often expanding previously held convictions. In short, they are willing to grow, asking that we instructors show them the way to do so. We can begin by understanding who they are and what they are thinking and feeling when they enter our classrooms.

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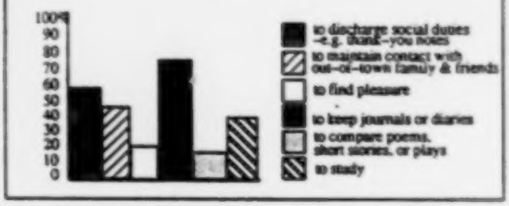
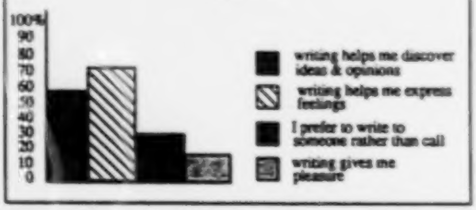
Appendix



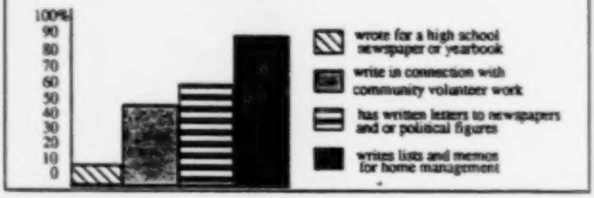
Purposes for Writing

Figure # 1



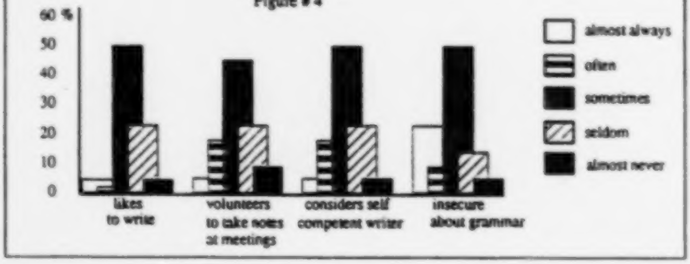
Effects of Writing

Figure # 2



Writing Backgrounds

Figure # 3



Self Concepts

Figure # 4

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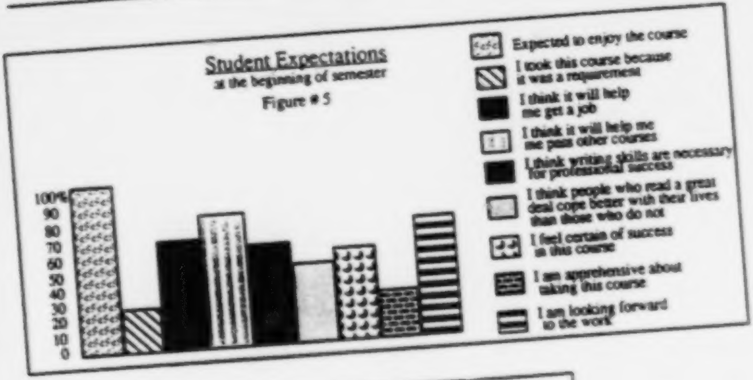
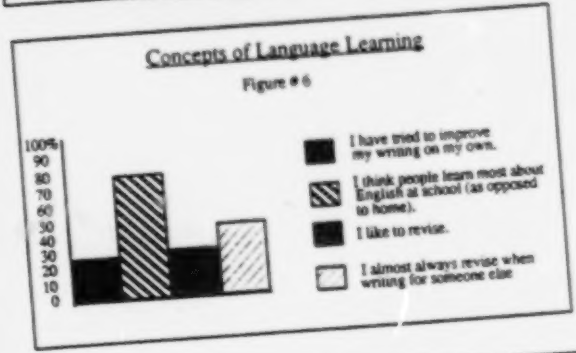
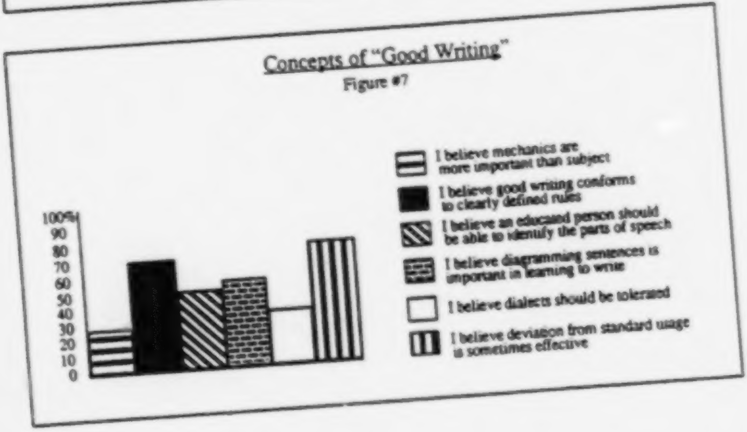


Student Expectations
at the beginning of semester
Figure # 5



Concepts of Language Learning
Figure # 6



Concepts of "Good Writing"
Figure #7

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1993 Notable Children's Books in the Language Arts (K-8)

Note: The following books, publishedin 1992, were selected by the Children's Literature Assembly of NCTE as outstanding books for children.

A Million Fish, More Or Less by Patricia McKissack. Illustrated by Dena Schutzer. Knopf, 1992.

Alph Beta Chowder by Jeanne Steig. Illustrated by William Steig. Harper Collins, 1992.

And the Green Grass Grew All Around by Alvin Schwartz. Illustrated by Sue Truesdell. HarperCollins, 1992.

Antics by Cathi Hepworth. G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1992.

Bard of Avon by Diane Stanley & Peter Vennema. Illustrated by Diane Standley. Morrow Junior Books, 1992.

Dancers in the Garden by Joanne Ryder. Illustrated by Judith Lopez. Sierra Club, 1992.

E.B. White: Some Writer! By Beverly Gherman. Illustrated with photographs. Antheneum, 1992.

Emily by Michael Bedard. Illustrated by Barbara Cooney. Doubleday, 1992.

Farmer Duck by Martin Waddell. Illustrated by Helen Oxenbury. Candlewick Press, 1992.

Fighting Words by Eve Merriam. Illustrated by David Small. Morrow Junior Books, 1992.

Hopscotch Around the World by Mary D. Landford. Illustrated by Karen Milone. Morrow Junior Books, 1992.

Martha Speaks by Susan Meddaugh. Illustrated by author. Houghton Mifflin, 1992.

Missing May by Cynthia Rylant. Orchard, 1992.

Morning Girl by Michael Dorris. Hyperion, 1992.

My Great-Aunt Arizona by Gloria Houston. Illustrated by Susan Condie Lamb. HarperCollins, 1992.

Old Black Fly by Jim Aylesworth. Illustrated by Stephen Gammell. Henry Holt, 1992.

Otters Under Water by Jim Arnosky. Illustrated by author. G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1992.

Surtsey, The Newest Place on Earth by Kathryn Lasky. Illustrated by Christopher Knight. Hyperion, 1992.

Talking with Artists compiled and edited by Pat Cummings. Bradbury, 1992.

Taste of Salt by Frances Temple. Orchard Books, 1992.

The Baby Zoo by Bruce McMillan. Photo-illustrated by author. Scholastic, 1992.

The Blue Skin of the Sea by Graham Salisbury. Delacorte, 1992.

The Exiles by Hilary McKay. Macmillan, 1992.

The Friendship Song by Nancy Springer. Antheneum, 1992.

The Leaving by Budge Wilson. Philomel, 1992.

The Listening Silence by Phyllis Root. Illustrated by Dennis McDermott. HarperCollins, 1992.

Thriteen Moons on a Turtle's Back by Joseph Bruchac and jonathan London. Illustrated by Thomas Locker. Philomel, 1992.

Townsend's Warbler by Paul Fleishman. HarperCollins, 1992.

Where's My Teddy by Jez Alborough. Illustrated by author. Candlewick Press, 1992.

Who Shrank My Grandmother's House? by Barbara Esbensen. Illustrated by Eric Beddows. HarperCollins, 1992.

Students Today

In her research on youths and learning today, Shirley Brice Heath of Stanford University uncovered some revealing statistics about the nature of contemporary education in America:

- In the Los Angeles school district, between 1970 and today, numbers of Latino, African American, and Asian American students have grown from less than half to 9 out of 10. In 1990, 92 percent of Atlanta's public school students were African American.

- Currently, only 5 to 6 percent of students come from "idealized" nuclear families of two parents with the wife at home.

- By the year 2000, in the top six metropolitan school districts, one-third of children starting school will belong to teenage mothers (only about 45 percent of whom will have completed high school)

- Between now and the year 2000, the proportion of 15-17-year olds in the population will double.

- In 1990, 4 in 10 Latinos aged 16 to 24 were out of school without diplomas, half of them unschooled beyond ninth grade. One in 4 African American males is not in jail, on probation or on parole.

- Numbers of weapons found in the hands of students in school in major cities grew from 3 per hundred in 1983 to 55 per hundred in 1992.

- Workers in "nonprofessional" jobs spend an average of 65 percent of their day taking action or making decisions based on interpretation of symbols.

- In high school English classes, students spend less than 10 percent of their time in sustained reading or writing, about 3 percent in reading for action or decision making.

(Reprinted from The Council Chronicle, April 1993, by permission of NCTE.)

A Case Study: The Effects of "Tell-Me-More" on One ESL Student's Writing

Bill Lyons

Shi-Chin, a graduate student from Taiwan, voluntarily scheduled herself for a semester into the University of Iowa Writing Lab for two one-hour conferences a week with a writing instructor. No teacher referred her to the lab, and she was not looking for help with a particular kind of writing. Through analyzing the nature of Shi-Chin's revisions we can better understand the effect of teacher response on student writing.

While some students, especially graduate students, did sometimes come to the lab looking to improve their ability to write academic papers, Shi-Chin wanted to improve her writing generally and so was receptive to the variety of expressive writing "invitations" offered to most lab students. An assumption of the lab staff was that students whose expressive writing improved in terms of fluency and clarity would be more able later to make comparable gains in transactional (including academic) writing and perhaps even in poetic writing. Although this paper focuses on Shi-Chin's growth in the use of expressive writing in a lab situation, the method used to respond to Shi-Chin's writing might be applicable to other writing situations. It remains an open question whether the responses used in this case study would nurture the same kind of writing growth if students were working with a text-based assignment. Also, it is not certain whether ongoing teacher conferences outside of a lab setting would have produced the same drafts and revisions. If the writing instructor's questions were the only ones the student had available to consider, similar results would seem likely.

"Tell-me-more" questions (TMM), (developed by Lou Kelly, retired Director of the Writing Lab at the University of Iowa) were the most common responses Shi-Chin received. Two versions of the TMM question—'What other activities do you remember, related to this draft?" and "What else do you remember about this activity?"—and Shi-Chin's revisions made in response to those questions—document the potential influence of this kind of response.

Responders' questions can influence revision, and the student writer, especially one who lacks confidence, often feels obligated to pay attention to questions, especially teacher questions. Shi-Chin clearly responds to the teacher's questions. It is interesting to note that even many confident students, if they are intent on earning A's, write and revise in whatever way the teacher seems to endorse. Nancy Sommers writes:

> The first finding from our research on styles of commenting is that teachers' comments can take students' attention away from their own purposes in writing a particular text and focus that attention on the teachers' purpose in commenting. (149)

Arthur Applebee notes that schools still teach writing in order to examine the writer rather than to support the writer's development (187). Given the basic writer's likely predisposition to try to please the teacher, as part of the business of "earning a good grade," it seems especially important for the teacher's questions to allow the writer as much latitude as possible. Donald Graves says that listening to writers "is more a deliberate act than a natural one" (100), so the responder needs to continually work to listen rather than to tell. Tom Romano says that he has to "work hard during my conferences to keep my directives fewer than my questions" (101).

Before examining revisions Shi-Chin made in response to the two TMM questions, it may be helpful to keep in mind some other models of response. Thomas Carnicelli, in Eight Approaches to Teaching composition, suggests focusing a conference on content and point of view first, and organization, style and mechanics only later (103). To promote students' independent judgments about their papers, he suggests that the student's response to their own paper, rather than the teacher's, be the focus of a conference (109). Yet this quote, from a student in Carnicelli's New Hampshire Freshman English program—"just with gentle hints [from the teacher], I was surprised at what mistakes I saw myself" (109)—seems to document response patterns that TMM seeks to avoid: (1) a general "deficit" approach to revision—seeking out what is "wrong" rather than building on what is strong, and (2) trapping the student into playing the game of uncovering the teacher's agenda. And while Carnicelli cites the continuing need for honest praise of student work, he moves firmly to the position that "the teacher's function is to lead students to adopt the teacher's values, the common criteria of good writing shared by the teacher, the English profession, and . . . educated people in general" (116). Even though he says that a writing conference should be a genuine conversation that follows no set pattern (119), Carnicelli would seem to endorse using focused questions to encourage the writer to develop the paper in specific ways the teacher believes it should be developed. The feeling that these conferences may project is the one his colleague, Wilburn Sims, describes, in which "the teacher asks a question then ends up providing an answer" (118).

Muriel Harris, in Teaching One-to-One: The Writing Conference, talks about ways to make writers self-sufficient, ranging from Archibald MacLeish's students being completely in charge of their own writing, through Don Murray's use of a whole series of questions for the student, including "What did you learn from this piece of writing?"—even though the writer may not be finished—and "What questions do you have for me?"—a question that might prompt teachers to inappropriately supply actual words and phrases to the writers they are trying to help become independent, and finally, at the more directive end of the spectrum, to Roger Garrison and Thomas Carnicelli, both proceeding with specific teacher agendas (Harris 28-29).

Harris specifically mentions the "tell-me-more" idea when listing David Taylor's skills for teachers establishing themselves as good listeners in students' minds: paraphrasing, perception checking, leading ("An indirect lead might be 'Tell me more about. . .'"), and interpreting (57-58). She includes TMM as one strategy useful in the context of a range of strategies. Harris' implied perception of TMM as one strategy among many leads into the focus of this paper, a case study demonstration that whatever the teacher's response to student writing, this response may be surprisingly influential in determining what the student does next with the paper. Elbow and Belanoff get at the question of ownership: "The definition of a good student is someone who can learn the most, and what makes you learn the most is the ability to own even what you are stuck with—to take over and internalize what comes from outside. This is a difficult and paradoxical skill" (6).

In Response to Student Writing, Sarah Warshauer Freedman says that successful response "leaves the ownership of the writing in the hands of the student writer" (160). A responder's questions can take away the writer's ownership. Donald Murray notes, "There is always the danger of appropriating the text and making it your own, forcing or manipulating the student into writing your vision in your language" (139). When a responder asks for elaboration or clarification, the writer must decide how much to allow those questions to influence revision. Writers must "claim their decision-making power," Lucy Calkins says (146). On the one hand, the writer often desires response to see if a paper is being received as it was intended: on the other hand, the writer must guard against the possibility that the reader may envision the paper going off in a new direction. Lil Brannon and C. H. Knoblauch argue that writing teachers must recognize students' rights to their own texts (165).

Even if the writer invites questions, as in the praise-question-polish method of responding to writing (Lyons 42), the instructor may dramatically influence the writer's final product through the asking of any question. Jeffrey Sommers notes that the respondent might turn the question back on the writer and say, "What questions would you like me to answer about your draft?" (176). Or, the responder might pose a question about the content of the draft, or about related content.

Here are drafts by Shi-Chin, a second language student, about two childhood memories, riding a bike and playing with paper dolls:

> . . .The most enjoyable thing in my schoolage is to ride my bike and hang around. Because almost every semester we had new classmates, I would follow them in order to find out where they lived. This is the most interesting thing. I could discover so many new lands, alleys, and all kinds of architecture. Riding on the street, I tried to figure out the meaning and pronunciation of each Chinese character although I was just a second-grade student, and it helped me alot. Because of this I learned some good phrases and vocabulary.
>
> . . .When I was a girl . . .I enjoyed to draw a lot of paper fashion clothes for my paper doll. . . .Use a hard-board paper and draw a pretty young girl. Most important is you have to give it color. I mean paint it. Then cut it against its format. So you own a paper doll. Following, you can draw any fashion style clothes for her and put it on her. Maybe, just one girl would be too boring. I guess drawing one family must be very interesting, because you can direct a soap opera. . . .

As Shi-Chin, and her lab teacher looked back over her folder of writing for the year, Shi-Chin had said, "Maybe you will see writing that you would like to ask more questions about." And the teacher had said, browsing, and spotting these two papers: " It is interesting how writers sometimes think back to the time when they could just play. You wrote about when you were young, playing paper dolls and riding your bike around. Do you think of any other particular activity you enjoyed doing?"

Notice that the responder does not ask about the writer's concerns in these papers or even about the particular content of these papers but instead asks if the writer can think of other activities in the category of childhood play. The writer's response is spontaneous, fun, and as delightful as in the bike and paper doll stories:

> Well, I liked to read a lot, and I would always go to a bookstore and spend the day or whole afternoon or whole morning. And I can read a whole book. I don't have to buy the book, because I can finish the whole book in the bookstore. At that time, the bookstore keeper will come to see me and said, "Well, um, little girl, would you like to buy this book? If you don't like to buy it, please don't, or please put it on the shelf. You are damage them if you just watch them.. If you want to buy, you have to buy. You can't read them here." Then I would go to the next store and find the same book there. So that's the way I can read a lot of fairy stories in that bookstore.
> . . .The bookstore keepers always become mad because they think all those kids just want to read those book and won't buy anything, they won't buy anything, anytime, and they can't make money from those kids. Sometime they will damage the books. So they just don't like them.

In another instance, Shi-Chin wrote:

> There is one thing impresses me so much is that one day when I came to the post office to find a Iowa City map but failed, one man came to ask me (I guess I probably looks very confused) "Are you looking for something? Can I help you?" and he bring me to the office and finally I got what I want. Nice people makes this little town more appealing.

And the responder said, "Earlier you wrote, 'Nice people make this little town so appealing.' Have you met other nice people?"

Notice, again, that the responder chooses not to ask about the man at the Iowa City Post Office but rather about other related experiences. The writer responds with an additional experience and leaves the original experience in the dead-letter office.

> What I would like to talk about is this woman. One day I was in a bad mood because I got a bad grade on my midterm last semester. I feel so bad and I work on it because I don't know how to do it. My face must have shown that I was feeling bad, because one woman was passing and talked to me and said, "Oh, you look so sad. What happened to you? Do you like to talk to me for a while and then you feel better if you talk to somebody and tell what happened to you. You won't feel so terrible and sad." I just wonder how this woman could be so care full to people who are not her friends. I really appreciate it. It really surprised me. I am so touched.

> This woman gave me a warm feeling.

Another approach to responding, one which generally contrasts with the "What other activities do you remember?" kind of question, is "What else can you tell me about this activity?"

Here is Shi-Chin's first draft about visiting Minneapolis-St. Paul:

> "It's great" when I heard that Savanna told me she would like to invite me to her home during spring break. I can image how wonderful this trip would be and I am excited about it. Because both of us don't have cars, we decided to take Greyhound, although it will take about eight hours. However, this is the first time I have to spend all day long on the bus. But we talked a lot. Savanna is quite unusual I think. For most American undergraduate students that I know, they love popular music, watch a lot of T.V. They spend time at the bars with friends at Friday night. They seldom cook for themself, Microwaveable foods are preferred. Then, what makes Savanna different from others? Here is some examples. When we drove on the way to a zoo in St. Paul, I asked her why her mother didn't buy a automatic car instead of a four-speed car? since it is more convenient. She said: "Why do we have to do everything fast?" So she will spend three hour to prepare a nice dinner for her family, and three-month to make a pretty gown by herself rather than buying a gown at department stores for a prom at her high school.

The reader-response was not, "What other trips have you taken and what were they like?" Rather, it was "How marvelous that you got to go to Minneapolis-St. Paul! Savanna's mother sounds relaxed, like someone I'd like to meet. Would you tell me more about your trip?" The second installment of Shi-Chin's writing on this topic broadens the picture considerably:

> We arrived Minneapolis at about 10 p.m. When we walked out the bus depot, I saw four people taking signal strolled in the sidewalks. Savanna explained that they were bus drivers on strike. I felt sorry for them, it was so cold outside, and they had to struggle in order to get what they want. Maybe as the old saying said "there is no free lunch." The following day is St. Patrick Day. I have no idea about this festival. But soon, I found what was going on that special Irish holiday. Because I saw a man in green jacket, and a women wearing a green hat. It's kind of funny. In China, if a woman have a fair with other men, then we'll say "This woman buys a green hat

> for her husband." So, Chinese think green hat means shamefulness. However, I think green brend was quite appealing to me. In order to let me know something about Ireland, Savanna and her mom took me to a dance club to learn Irish dance. With Irish band playing Irish music, we did have a good time in that afternoon. I guess Irish people must be very close to their family. Because their folk dance reveals that they enjoyed being together.

"Tell-me-more" questions are "praise of the highest order," according to Lou Kelly. The fact that the reader wants to know more from the writer praises the writer for bridging the gap between writer and reader. Notice that in the third "elaboration draft," Shi-Chin picks up where she left off, with the Irish dance, but then moves on to a topic not directly related to the visit, a topic that may in time lead to the invitation to shape the paper so that it becomes more than additive and associative:

> After the energetic dance, all of us feel tired. But, we still had another important thing to do—making a french dinner. Savanna used to be in France for half year, she taught me how to enjoy drinking. This is another new experience. In China, "drinking" just means pour down some alcoholic liquid into your mouth, however, French people sip wine and then keep the wine in their mouth for 2-3 minutes before they swallow it. The most unusual thing is that you have to use you tongue to feel the reminder of the alcohol in your mouth. Drinking the French way makes me think about a shy young lady, and in Chinese way, makes me feel that I am a masculine man. From the fact that French people spend a lot of time in dinner, we can figure out what kind of relax life they lead. They don't have a lot of pressure like people in developing countries—trying hard to catch up the rest of the world, or the people in superpower countries—working hard in order to keep their leading position. They have plenty time to appreciate the beauty of lives. For them, maybe the most important thing in life is the quality of life itself.

On her own, Shi-Chin has naturally moved from a description of events in Minneapolis-St. Paul to an exploration of what it means to drink in France and in China and then to a sophisticated comparison of developing countries and superpowers. She might have done the same thing had the responder asked something like, "What did you learn on your trip?" But then again, the decision to write on that topic would have been at least in part, the responder's. By coming to that perspective on her own, the writer was able to choose not only the original topic, the trip, but to explore that topic expressively and end up moving naturally to observations about the French being concerned with the quality of life.

Do direct questions lead a writer like Shi-Chin into particular kinds of elaboration or clarification that may be more important to the reader than to the writer? Can writers decide whether or not to pursue a direction suggested by a question? Are "tell-me-more" questions broader, leaving more decisions to the writer? The writer needs to retain control of the paper, and this is difficult to do if the responder's questions are too specific.

In the discussion about childhood activities other than riding her bike and playing with paper dolls, either of which may have deserved elaboration. She ended up telling about a new topic, reading bookstore books without buying them. Perhaps if the responder had asked broad "tell-me-more" questions (I would be interested in knowing more about your childhood experiences. Could you tell me more about them?) The writer would have been able to more easily choose to elaborate or not, and to choose the content to be elaborated on.

In the papers about Minneapolis-St. Paul, the fact that Shi-Chin in a short time began reflecting about her experiences suggests that encouragement does produce further elaboration on the original topic, in this case on aspects of her trip that emerged in Shi-Chin's memory as being especially interesting or important to her.

Often the responder is curious about particular information or views shared by a writer, and in everyday talk much information is exchanged in response to specific questions. Too often, however, the responder says, "Well, I had a bike when I was young, too. Did your bike have a bell like mine?" and the writer and responder are off on a flight of "me-too" chirpings that may or may not help the writer develop the original draft. In Writing to be Read, Ken Macrorie calls this a "trap to watch out for. If you hear a writing. . .about a grandmother, you may begin thinking about your own grandmother and then say, 'I liked your story because my own grandmother's like that, too.' . . .But by itself, [that human reaction] is no proof that the writing was strong" (85).

How gracious of the responder simply to show interest and support and to say, rather, "Tell me more about that. I would like to hear more of what you have to say." At the important moment of decision about what direction the initial draft might take, this kind of first response is likely to meet Sarah Warshauer Freedman's criterion of leaving the ownership of the writing in the hands of the student writer (160).

Some writers, whether elementary, secondary, college, or adult, seem to be unreasonably predisposed, like Shi-Chin, to revise in ways that grant the responder too much influence. Developing writers, who do not yet have the confidence to go their own way, need opportunities to make decisions, and mistakes, about revising if they are to retain ownership of their own writing. Writing instructors somehow need to nurture efforts to revise without being overly directive.

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Bring Your Class to Life: Ideas for the Innovative English Classroom

Paula Brown

Educators of any subject or discipline must use creativity in the classroom in order to be outstanding teachers and create a learning environment that is enjoyable for both the teacher and the students. English classrooms at the secondary level, grades seven through twelve, are certainly in need of a great deal of creativity to teach this subject which consists of not only grammar and literature, but vocabulary, reading skills and listening skills, and many other topics closely related to these. I used teacher interviews and questionnaires for English teachers who are using innovative techniques in their classrooms. These techniques work for these teachers and their students, and can make a difference in many other English classrooms if applied. The teachers explained in great detail what they consider to be the most exciting, innovative, and wonderful classroom idea they have discovered. Just sharing ideas is an experience that most English teachers enjoy, especially when the ideas involve improving learning through an exemplary program. Through methods such as the use of writing folders, cooperative learning, personal writing on actual events known to the students, the workshop approach, and notebook checks, five Alabama teachers have discovered a way to enhance the learning experience for both themselves as well as their students.

Writing Folders

Writing is certainly a top priority for most high school English teachers. Rebecca Chambers, a twelfth grade English teacher at E.B. Erwin High School, describes a writing folder that she uses for all her students. The students add pieces of writing in this folder throughout the year and also keep writing notes in the folder. These writing notes consist of information given by Chambers as well as notes the students themselves make concerning their own writing. Some students may feel that by keeping notes on past writing mistakes from other papers, they can improve future pieces of writing. Many topics are used and examples of various themes and essays are put into the folder. Such topics include ideas from the students themselves and themes from current classroom studies of literature. At the end of the year, most students are surprised to see how their writing has changed from the beginning to the end of the year. Chambers has been teaching for twenty-seven years, and believes that the students are learning better grammar skills as well as improving the content of their writing by examining their past writing examples.

Cooperative Learning

Sharon Freeman Laborde is a ninth-grade and eleventh-grade English teacher at Woodlawn High School. She has been teaching for five years. Laborde has found that many of the traditional approaches to teaching literature do not work in an inner city minority classroom. As a result of past failures, many of these students feel "turned off" to reading in general. She uses a cooperative learning approach that appeals to all of her students. Many of the activities in her classroom are done in groups and through discussion. Such activities might include a new version to the ending of a novel such as Of Mice and Men. She may have a discussion of current news items and how the students can relate to the tragedy of some of Shakespeare's plays. The writing activities might center around family history, black history, and self esteem topics. While working in groups, Laborde walks around the room monitoring the conversations of the students. Ms. Laborde believes that her students respond well to this type of teaching, because they have not been exposed to these techniques (group work and class discussion) in the past. This is an example of an exemplary program that is designed to meet specific needs of her minority students.

Personal Writing

The Canterbury Tales is usually taught in the twelfth-grade English class. Marie Duncan, a teacher at Moody High School, uses creative writing assignments involving the students' personal lives. The students must write a "tale" concerning an event or incident that has actually happened to them or an acquaintance. Duncan claims that these tales range from the very serious to a story that "would make Jerry Clower laugh." This type of writing can be combined with book talks and library work. These book talks consists of teachers and students discussing the most recent books they have read. The books are in the school library, and many students are inspired to check out books in which they have recently been exposed. The students can read other works of literature in the library (besides the ones they have heard other students discuss) and give talks on the material they read. They can also write about an event in their lives that can compare to the piece of literature that they share with the class. Duncan creates interest in reading by allowing the students to interact with each other and write about events they have experienced.

Workshop Approach

Sandra Edwards is an eighth grade reading/literature teacher at Huffman Middle School. Her in-class reading and writing assignments are based on techniques described by Nancy Atwell in her book, In The Middle. The students are introduced to a piece of literature on Monday and given a written assignment to be turned in on Friday. On Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, the students do a type of reading workshop. As they read in class, the students keep a journal of what they are reading. Edwards believes that many of her students have been turned on to reading through this process. On Friday, the students discuss the selection assigned on Monday and take a quiz on their reading. Homework is also checked on this day. The major purpose of this type of teaching is to involve students in the reading and writing process while making them interested in what they are doing. Since Edwards has adopted this approach the students seem to enjoy the interaction with each other during class discussions. The students now respond to literature with a more positive attitude and with more interest in the reading and writing process.

Notebooks

The paper work involved in being an English teacher can at times be completely overwhelming. This is not to say that other teachers have an easy time of grading, just that many English teachers may lack ideas on how to ease the work load, especially around the end of a grading period. Laura Butler, a tenth grade English teacher at Homewood High School, has found a way to do notebook checks without ever having to look at a notebook. The students are given very specific instructions for keeping a notebook including guidelines for sections and how to label each daily assignment. For example, one section might be kept for vocabulary, one for grammar assignments, and another for literature assignments. Students may be told to label each assignment with date assigned, title of assignment, page numbers. dates due, etc. At the end of the grading period, a short answer test is given to check the organization of the notebook. For example, this test might have questions such as the following:

- How many exercises were assigned on October 15?
- On what page can Exercise 6, assigned November 2, be found?
- How many questions does Exercise B, completed May 1, contain?

Using notebooks, students take a test containing questions similar to the way the notebook is organized. This type of test can be graded quickly, yet it requires students to keep their notebooks up-to-date and well organized so they can do well on the tests. Butler uses this technique at the end of every grading period to make certain the students have completed all homework as well as class work.

Each of the five teachers discussed have formulated innovative classroom strategies that help to improve the education of students. These are experienced teachers who have been teaching English for a combined ninety-three years! All of these teachers have found a way to get through to their students by getting them actively involved in the learning process. To find exemplary programs in English, one must be willing to experiment and find just the right techniques for the teacher and the students. How do you find exemplary programs?

1. research
2. professional organizations
3. word of mouth
4. reading and learning as many different techniques for teaching in the English classroom as possible.

These techniques make the class more interesting for the teacher and consequently more interesting for the students. After all, English should be a fun subject to teach and learn!

Hearing Children's Voices

Gwen McCorquodale

Everyday in a writing workshop classroom there's an element of surprise that excites me. Like the Jack-in-the-Box you never know the exact moment when it's going to pop up bringing delight. It is a large part of the joy of teaching for me.

I feel this spirit most when a student sits in the author's chair sharing his published piece of writing with the class. A hush falls over the room as the child welcomes the listener to his thoughts. And you enter expectantly, reverently, as the voice spreads its magic.

I've often wanted to catch this spirit and bottle it to dispense like a magic potion, for I know if other teachers could feel its powers they would undo the cords that bind them to traditional text-based teaching. The reading and writing programs of many elementary classrooms fail to value the contributions of learners. Basal readers, workbooks, and worksheets corral the personal interaction between teacher and pupil, and between pupil and pupil. Our students voices will not be heard if our philosophy promotes practices that places bits in their mouths.

Writing in a writing workshop classroom is not taught in isolation, delegated to a specific subject area with a textbook of skills to be mastered; rather, each child is viewed as having a storehouse of experiences and information and this becomes his own unique textbook. Pages that are filled with all kind of experiences—everyday and extraordinary, past and present, exhilarating and touching—are opened as the writer brings his or her special voice to this process.

Skills are taught when a specific need for them emerges in the context of the child's writing, not in isolation. Therefore, the student is able to apply these skills to a meaningful text—his own.

With all the energy of a revival preacher I want to shout and tell of the wonder and joy that occurs when a teacher embraces a teaching philosophy that centers on a literature-based reading program and its natural outgrowth—the writing process. But, pointing and shaking my finger isn't nearly as effective in initiating change in our thinking about children as language learners and about classrooms as communities of learners as is the unique voice of each child.

Using a personal classroom experience I hope to hammer home the need for writing in the classroom to build on the foundation that students can communicate their own special thoughts, and that their views of their world and its relationship to their beliefs, feelings, thoughts, experiences, and reactions provide meaningful contexts for communication with themselves and others.

Josh is one of several pupils in my classroom who received recognition and honors for poems and essays on the Civil Rights Movement. Josh's work, "When I Think. ."was highlighted in an article in The Birmingham News, and he was chosen to read his poem at the National Conference of Christians and Jews Awards Dinner. And more was to come! I was notified that a local television station wanted to feature Josh reading his poem. Wouldn't you expect a child to sprout a head as big as a watermelon with all this attention?

To help ease the pain of the same student being recognized again, I started our morning time together by noting the positive and thoughtful actions and attitudes the students had shown to each other. I shared with the class how natural it is to want your *own* writing to be recognized, but how truly remarkable our class had been in celebrating Josh's success. The children chimed-in telling of kind remarks and deeds done by their classmates.

In this climate of care and concern for each other, Josh asked, "Mrs. McCorquodale, may I say something to the class?"

With bottom lip quivering and eyes staring straight ahead, he spoke. "In kindergarten I was a klutz, and in first and second grades I didn't get good grades. I really felt dumb. I'm not used to this kind of attention. Everybody's been so sweet to me."

What moving words! I knew I should say something. It seemed as if all forty-two eyes were on me, waiting for a clue. Looking around for something to focus on as I tried to gather some words that would be appropriate, I heard applause. Yes, the children were clapping—something we do after a child shares his published piece of work with the class. It was a sign of tribute. I could feel the warmth coming from twenty little souls afire with love for each other.

Josh's simple, heartfelt confession addresses some complex issues in education today. Beneath the spoken words are silent lessons that express a teacher's belief system on how children learn: the need for meaningful, authentic learning; the relationship between self-esteem and learning; and the need to develop a community of learners who trust, encourage and support each other.

The wonderful bonus of using the writing process is the special "voice" that each child brings to his writings. The pleasure I am having through implementing this approach in my classroom is directly proportional to the response I'm receiving from reading my students' writings.

WHEN I THINK. . .

When I think of black I don't think of an eclipse;
I think of black skin.

When I think of a king I don't think of King Tut.
I think of Martin Luther King, Jr.

When I think of invisible I don't think of an invisible friend.
I think of an invisible wall. Invisible between black and whites.

When I think of an emergency exit I don't think of when your
house is on fire and you have to get out.
I think of the emergency exit on the bus that blacks had to use
to get in to ride the bus.

BUT NOW . . .

We have defeated the INVISIBLE WALL
Blacks and whites can hold hands and have peace
because Martin Luther King, Jr. had
A DREAM!

Josh Parker

Do Book Clubs Educate?

"The whole idea of the school book club was to put in kids' hands books they like," researcher Sean Walmsley pointed out. "This is not a classical literature club. It's designed to sell to kids."

As part of the study, "School Book Clubs and Literacy Development," he evaluated nearly 3,300 books representing the total selections of several clubs, "Faddish titles are present," he said, but the range of offerings contradicts the impression among some teachers that club lists lack breadth. "Almost all of the major genres are represented."

Catalogs are heavy on popular, easy-reading fiction about families and school life (19 percent of offerings—27 if you include stories with animals). "Babysitter" and other series books are present, "but there are a lot of books that would challenge the strongest reader."

As for informational books (15 percent of the total studied), 6 percent deal with sports, but the total represents "an enormously wide range" and includes "topics that challenge children to enlarge their knowledge of the world."

Biography is a strong category, as in historical fiction; mysteries and adventure stories are right up there. Folk tales (often retold and featuring big-name illustrators) include African and Asian stories. "Major authors and illustrators from diverse cultural groups are represented, " Walmsley said, adding that he doesn't know how diversity in club lists compares with diversity throughout the publishing industry.

(Reprinted from The Council Chronicle, April 1993, by permission of NCTE.)

Vital Signs 3: Restructuring the English Classroom

Edited by James Collins. Portsmouth: Boynton, 1992 195pp.

Reviewed by
Alan Brown
Livingston University, Livingston , Alabama

Ever since William Bennett's tenure as Secretary of Education during the 1980's, strategies for education reform have been bantered about at the national, state and local levels. For the most part, restructuring has been envisioned as flowing from administrators to teachers. However, in Vital Signs 3: Restructuring the English Classroom, James Collins offers an alternative to the top-down models of educational restructuring by giving the classroom teachers the rare opportunity to present their views. The English teachers and professors who have written the chapters in this collection make it very clear that any change in the way that English is taught in this country should be made by the instructors themselves, not by administrators.

The book is divided into four major sections: "Motives", "Methods", "Restructuring College Composition", and "Restructuring Teacher Education." In Part One, the educators explain why the restructuring of English curricula and classrooms is necessary. The authors of the two chapters that make up this section argue that students would be motivated to learn reading and writing if the English classroom were less structured. Susan Ohanian says that because students are so diverse, it does not make much sense to require everyone to read any particular book. When the choice of what to read is left up to the students, they will choose "hard" books as well as "easy" ones. She draws this belief from her experience with students in her seventh—and—eighth—grade reading classes and from the premise that the goal of education is to provide students with the criteria to make their own choices. Martha West believes that too many rules discourage students from using their imaginations. She eschews what she terms the "traditional view" toward restructuring as a new way to control the learning process in favor of a method that motivates students to express their individuality. Her method, which she calls "improvisational teaching," encourages the teacher to devise "open-ended" strategies that can work a number of ways. Thus, if an assignment does not work as well with one class as it did with another, it can be revised on the spot.

Part Two presents methods for restructuring English classrooms. Peter Smagorsky advocates structuring classes around the five modes of intelligence that English teachers usually exclude: musical, spatial, bodily, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. He then shows how students can express themselves through these unconventional intelligences by means of interviews (interpersonal), videos (spatial), and journals (intrapersonal). Suzanne Miller constructs activities that require students to turn to each other instead of to the teacher for answers to questions they may have about a literary work. Discussion, she says, helps students match their personal experiences with the themes embodied in the reading. David Schaafsma and Michael Smith also favor having students refer to their own life experiences in the English classroom. Personal narratives not only help students develop authority in writing, but they can also be used as preparation for reading literary works. Carolyn Handa explains how the changes that are being made now by technology in the English classroom will affect English instruction in the future. She envisions a "paperless" classroom where all writing is done on computers. Diane Bruner's chapter on breaking down cultural stereotypes will likely be viewed by many readers as one of the most controversial chapters in the book. After tracing her own struggle against discrimination, she explains how she uses books that misrepresent minority experiences to get students to open up about their personal experiences with discrimination. Interestingly enough, some of the books that she offers as examples of "implicit" racism, such as Sounder, are well-entrenched in the curricula of many schools across the country.

Part Three shifts the focus of the book to the restructuring of college composition and literature classrooms, although the ideas discussed in these chapters also have important implications for secondary education. The first three chapters stress the re-integration of reading and writing in classes composed primarily of underprepared students. Deborah Mutnick bases her new reading and writing program on the University of Pittsburg's program for basic writers, which provides remediation through skills-oriented practice. Her program, which is built around themes situating students in history, examines issues of exclusion, silencing, power and inequality in the first semester to help students develop authority. The students then exercise that authority in the second semester of the course as they explore environmental crises. Utilizing one of Smagorinsky's "neglected" modes of intelligence, namely the visualization of intra- and interpersonal relations, Sharon Thomas attempts to actively engage students in the reading—for—learning process. Her students draw sketches and maps as part of a pre-reading strategy to capture their attention before they begin to read. She believes that if she helps her students tap whatever knowledge they have relevant to the text, they will read with greater understanding. Denise David's double-entry journal replaces the comprehension questions that she used to ask at the end of a short story. Students record actual lines from the story in the left-hand column of the journal and their response to the passage in the right-hand column. This approach helps students arrive at meaning without sacrificing the literary experience. Harriet Malinowitz's plan for a multicultural curriculum reflects her belief that we cannot make society a safe place for gays and lesbians unless the classroom is remade in the same manner. Placing gay and lesbian studies along with gender, race, and class, she supplements the literary works with gay and lesbian speakers and with pamphlets from ACT UP.

Part Four deals with restructuring teacher education. It discusses issues that are relevant to both secondary and higher education. In the graduate seminar described by Robert J. Belchner, James L. Collins and Susan Syzmanski, each teacher formed a working relationship with one or two Native American middle school students. Teachers and students learned cooperatively by engaging in activities such as walking in the woods or writing at computers. Sally Hudson-Ross's chapter is a collection of letters written by fourteen teachers who have converted their classrooms into reading and writing workshops. In a sense, theirs is the most revealing chapter in the entire book in that it demonstrates that traditional structures do not entirely disappear in every classroom in which a new structure has been adopted. Echoing the book's premise that teachers have been left out of the reform process, Ruth Vinz asserts that teachers can gain the confidence to impose their own reforms if they look closely at the four sources of power that most experienced teachers possess. The teacher as archaeologist views curriculum as a socially constructed artifact that should reflect the needs and interests of today's students. The teacher as anthropologist examines the pluralistic cultures within the classroom in order to ensure that the voices that dictate change come primarily from the students. The teacher as artist is always aware of the shaping function of education. The teacher as reformer derives his zeal from his role as an insider who is painfully aware of the limitations and potential of both students and teachers.

Vital Signs 3: Restructuring the English Classroom successfully demonstrates that teachers have the capacity to restructure their own classrooms in a way that enhances what is vital to the teaching of English. The strategies in this well-balanced collection, ranging the entire gamut from the practical (Hudson-Ross) to the visionary (Handa), are sure to stimulate discussion in teachers' lounges and department meetings. However, even if we find it difficult to adopt any of the strategies discussed in this book, the editor will have accomplished his goal if we are compelled to do nothing more than think to ourselves after putting the book down, "I have seen the future of English education, and it is US."

Appropriating Literacy: Writing and Reading in English as a Second Language

By Judith Rodby. Portsmouth, NH:
Boynton/Cook HEINEMANN, 1992. 151 pp.

Reviewed by
David R. Dedo
Samford University, Birmingham, Alabama

In Appropriating Literacy, Judith Rodby seeks to answer the fundamental question, "What does it mean to write and read in a second language?" (xv). The response, found primarily in Chapter Three, is a "dialectical theory of ESL literacy as a social act," derived from the more primary work in language theory laid out by Vygotsky and Bakhtin. While the answer 'literacy is a social act' (more specifically, dialectical in nature) seems reasonable, Rodby's theory, implications, suggested teaching methods, and even her overview of past research, are too simplistic to be of much help to either the novice or expert in ESL education.

Chapter One, "A Survey of Linguistic Theory and Concepts of ESL Literacy," is so selective that I'm tempted to claim that Rodby has set up a "straw person" for herself to knock down. In her review, Rodby acknowledges the interest in the ways that "ESL specialists have applied and interpreted linguistics, composition, and literacy research to form the theories that guide their educational practices" (1). However, any review of these contributing disciplines that virtually ignores the work conducted in socio- and psycho-linguistics and its impact on ESL must be considered suspect. While the discussion (i.e., critique) of the influence of structural linguistics, and later the linguistic theory of Chomsky, is thorough, the review of socio-linguistics ignores all research conducted in Great Britain, and the work of both Hymes and Labov is quickly dismissed in three paragraphs (pp. 20-21). And the review of the competence model of literacy neglects most of the most prominent research in the field; for example, Savignon and her influential work in "communicative competence" is not cited at all. In a similar manner, the work in psycho-linguistics is, for the most part, limited to criticism of the work of Krashen. Any text claiming to be concerned with ESL reading that does not include Patricia Carrell and her applications of schema-theory to the reading process is most certainly incomplete. (Carrell, by the way, is listed in the "Works Cited" section, but does not appear in the index—or, apparently, in the text.)

Chapter Three, "The Dialectics of ESL Literacy Practices," should be the heart of this work, but like much else in the text, it left me disappointed. When the time arrives for Rodby to firmly establish and describe her own theory, she is often limited to showing, not what it is, but what it isn't, or merely gesturing toward it in the abstract:

> Literacy is a contingent structure in reciprocal relation with its parts. This term describes dynamics rather than things or substances. Accordingly the terms of a dialectical interpretation are relative, signifying relationships rather than entities; a dialectical interpretation avoids reification. (56)

Since this theory by definition deals with relationships, one must wonder if it can in any way account for the "parts" mentioned in the first sentence of the quote above. Rodby is critical of the "Language Acquisition Device" hypothesis (that we are all biologically "wired" for language) because "all the details of the LAD have not been worked out" (19). But is her own theory somehow more complete?

The most informative claim that I discovered concerning ESL literacy is "In the heteroglossia [many varieties of English] of ESL literacy we find the dialectic of ethnicity and universality" (64). This, for Rodby, is the dynamic interplay between an ESL student's own voice (his/her version of English) and the ideal (at least for many ESL teachers) of "standard" English. Because of the "ideal," ESL teachers, in Rodby's opinion, "cannot find it [the student's ethnic variety] to be virtuous English" (65). Rodby argues that an alternative to the resulting authoritarianism in the ESL classroom is to allow students to "appropriate" English, since it is by nature heteroglossic, and not "absolute and pure." Unfortunately, one must question the practicality of this position. While it would seem to empower ESL students (at least psychologically), one wonders how successful they will become (at least materially) in our culture if they possess only their own "voice." It doesn't help that Rodby's major example of English "appropriation" is the published autobiography of Carlos Bulosan (America in the Heart). How does the ethnic voice/style/language help a non-native speaker to write a resume or complete a job application? How does it help to read a newspaper or magazine, or a set of instructions, things that we can assume are written in the voice of the "Other"? Finally, the possibility that this concept of literacy can be applied to all ESL learners is suspect. Almost all the examples are derived from the experiences of adult students who already possess some proficiency in English. What about the new learner who has no voice (ethnic or otherwise) in English? Will all of his or her learning necessarily be dialectical and social in nature?

On the positive side, Rodby's work does contribute to some practical dimensions of ESL teaching. Especially good is the section on reading ESL texts for the presence of multiple voices. This type of analysis can inform the reactions of ESL teachers to the written discourse of their students. And the teaching tips on forming a community ("communitas") in the classroom should certainly promote collaborative and student-centered language learning.

In conclusion, teachers in search of some new approaches and practices in the ESL classroom should have a look at the latter chapters of Rodby's work. However, those curious to examine a new theory of ESL literacy will probably be disappointed. While somewhat enlightening, this "theory" really seems to be simply an application of extant language theories to the ill-defined concept of ESL literacy.

Student-Centered Language Arts, K-12. 4th ed.

By James Moffett and BettyJane Wagner. Portsmouth, NH:
Boynton/Cook HEINEMANN, 1992.

Reviewed by
Jeffery E. Langham
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Cooperative learning. "Whole language" programs. Writing workshops. Writing across the curriculum. Peer editing. Student Portfolios. These are but a few of the touchstones of the student centered curriculum. Just think about the special dimension that each of these techniques has added to classroom instruction over the past several years. Think of the countless workshops, publications, and lectures that have "waxed poetic" about the benefits of these methods. For those of you who have incorporated these techniques into your classroom routines, think of all the positive results that you have enjoyed.

With these thoughts in mind, I found myself most amused by some of the introductory comments of authors Moffett and Wagner in this fourth edition of their celebrated work. They remind readers that these student centered elements were considered "radical and experimental" when initially set forth nearly 25 years ago. Ah, the everchanging tide of educational reform!

Written as a "textbook for teachers in training and a handbook for use of the job," Student-Centered Language Arts successfully fulfills both of these duties. As I read it, I automatically classified it as one of those classroom books with a "usefulness quotient" to render it "dog-earred and dilapidated" from daily reference within a very short period of time. Though one may be initially frightened by the size and scope of the text, those fears are quickly assuaged by virtue of the book's conversational style and tight structure. The first two sections of the book are devoted to tackling essential terminology as well as providing the classroom teacher with a design for initiating the new curriculum. The other two sections proceed at "breakneck pace" offering countless suggestions and recommendations for the ongoing maintenance of the student centered approach.

Entitled "Orientation," the first section of the book provides an incisive examination of the essence of language arts by framing statements of language arts goals. Of particular note in this section is the focus upon the "three 'I's" of an effective school language program." According to the authors, a student-centered curriculum focuses upon 1) individualization by teaching each learner to select and sequence his own activities and materials; 2) interaction by arranging for students to center on and teach each other; and 3) integration by interweaving all symbolized and symbolizing subjects so that the student can effectively synthesize knowledge structures in his own mind.

Within these initial pages, the book guides the reader through the implementation of a fully functioning student centered environment. Unquestionably, these recommendations are workable in any classroom at any time under any circumstances. Double enticing is the fact that these suggestions involve very little, if any, expense. The authors boldly advocate for teachers to eschew the textbook approach; they firmly assert that teachers "can run the best language arts program without any materials especially made for schools." They point out that a set of good trade books is all that teachers really need. What refreshing advice in these days when the specter of proration has inhibited many efforts in the classroom! In addition, the authors discuss the invaluable assistance that students can provide teachers in the production of classroom materials. In this regard, the authors provide many outstanding recommendations in support of their belief that in the student-centered curriculum "students are not waited on; they work."

"Basic Processes" serves as the title of the middle section of the book and encompasses the language arts themselves. Among the myriad of useful tips in this portion is a particularly effective discussion of literacy and a call for teachers to re-evaluate literature instruction in order to "drop the misguided vestige of cultural literacy." Here a crushing blow is dealt to teachers who force feed the revered classics of literature to their hapless students. Such thinking must go in making way for the student-centered approach. Alas, "people who don't read, don't read the classics." However, the authors consistently level their comments along these lines with hearty good humor.

Within this section, the authors also focus on incorporating classroom drama into daily routine as well as providing useful means of enhancing speaking and listening skills. Recommendations for the establishment of a writing workshop are also provided; these ideas are served up with a generous helping of "do's and don'ts" along these lines.

To conclude this portion of the text, the authors devote their energies to address "the bane of the existence of many language arts teacher' —EVALUATION. Moffett and Wagner are sympathetic to the plight of teachers in this regard; they fearlessly recommend that educators "work toward the elimination of grades." Nevertheless, in the meantime, they provide the weary educator with fresh and clever insights that promise to expedite the evaluative process.

The third and final section of the book serves as an invaluable ready reference to the ten kinds of discourse that make up the learning repertory of talking, reading, and writing across the curriculum. This section provides ample "How to" detail for the classroom teachers involving word play, labels, directions, actual and invented dialogues, as well as invented and true stories. True to form, their plethora of suggestions can be immediately incorporated in a regular classroom routine.

To borrow from the faddish lingo of movie criticism, I give Student-Centered Language Arts an "enthusiastic thumbs up" topped off with a "four star (****) rating for excellence in achievement." I was initially fearful that the book would provide scant useful material for my secondary English classes; the authors even state that "the recommended approaches proceed more easily in the lower grades." However, these fears proved quite unfounded.

Read this book and revel in the sense of classroom empowerment that it seeks to give you. Watch "isolationism" give way to a "learning community" extending miles beyond the physical boundaries of your school. Follow the book's instructions and annihilate those classroom gremlins (standardization, depersonalization, and compartmentalization) that cripple the spirits of our youthful charges.

Students Teaching, Teachers Learning

Edited by N. Amanda Branscombe, Disie Goswami, Jeffrey Schwartz
Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook, 1992. 330 pp.

Reviewed by
Carol Dean
Samford University, Birmingham, Alabama

Students Teaching, Teachers Learning is a book about classroom research. It is not, however, a scholarly work filled with boring statistical data. Rather, it is a very lively book about good teachers seeking to further their understanding of teaching and learning and about students working in partnerships with them.

It is a collection of articles by a variety of teachers from very different backgrounds, with the research results sometimes predictable, sometimes less than dramatic, sometimes quite surprising, sometimes unclear, but always enlightening and always challenging. All researchers came away with new insights because of the depths to which collaboration forced them to probe and with the realization of how much both teacher and student could be empowered by the process.

The first section entitled "Students Teaching" is comprised of nine articles and a response to each. One question researchers asked is, "What happens when students act as researchers?" to which were reported a variety of answers.

Some found that when students act as researchers their perceptions and sometimes their lives change dramatically. Amanda Branscombe and Charlene Thomas reported about Charlene, a student from a basic English class. Although she had dropped out of high school as a teenage mother, she was discovered years later using the techniques she had learned as a co-researcher to improve the literacy development of her own children.

Others reported that when students act as researchers, they take more responsibility for their own learning. Students in Evi Zoukis' foreign language classes, for example, learned far more on their own about the language in order to teach a skill to the rest of the class.

And others noted that when students act as researchers, they often develop self-confidence. Remedial high school students in South Carolina experienced a heightened self esteem as they tutored younger students.

In the second part of the book entitled "Teachers Learning" researchers learned that the roles of the student and teacher are not easily defined as students and teachers learn from each other. This section contains articles about collaboration between graduate students, between a professor and a graduate student and between a university supervisor and two student teachers. They are working together—sharing dialogue in order to examine processes and to examine themselves and their own effectiveness.

This book can be appreciated from many different viewpoints. Teachers interested in becoming researchers in their own classrooms can explore techniques employed by others. Those who would like to try innovative strategies in their classrooms can find ideas for a pre-first grade, a high school foreign language program and various levels in between. But, most importantly, those who like to read about vision and courage will enjoy the episodes for the stories they tell.

Active Voice: A Writing Program Across the Curriculum

By James Moffett. Portsmouth:
Boynton/Cook, Heinemann, 1992, 203pp.

Reviewed by
Paula Brown
Homewood High School, Birmingham, Alabama

In the book, Active Voice, James Moffett explains a writing program to be used with different age students. This is the second edition of this book, and Moffett includes many samples of students writing to go along with the specific assignments. The idea of a writing program across the curriculum has been in existence for quite some time now, but Moffett has helped teachers create a curriculum for writing with this book. He basically uses three ideas for writing. These are:

1. Revising Inner Speech
2. Dialogues and Monologues
3. Narrative into Essay

These approaches are discussed throughout the book by giving sample writing assignments as well as the actual examples from students.

Inner speech is a skill Moffett believes is important for writing spontaneously. He lists five assignments that can be given to students of any age as long as they are able to write. The other two assignments in this section are meant for the student who can reflect on a topic; possibly a child of ten or eleven. The stream of consciousness writing is one of the most interesting because of the freedom the student feels when writing.

In dialogues and monologues, Moffett suggests that students create scripts by using vocal speech. This is a new approach due to the dialogue involved. Many students do not have an opportunity to write in this manner and creativity is enhanced through this writing process. The activities in this section appear to be almost like a drama class. Such activities include taking surveys and interviews, writing dialogue for comic strips, and making up a monologue for a character in which the student feels comfortable portraying.

The group of assignments titled narrative into essay covers actuality and fiction. Moffett shows more of how individuals develop intellectually by giving some more fully developed assignments and some easier activities for less developed students. He uses the idea of story starters to begin writing. Keeping a diary or journal appeals to many students because of the importance given to everyday occurrences. This section of the book is the longest because Moffett has chosen to give the reader many examples which clarify the actual assignment.

James Moffett definitely has some wonderful ideas for the teacher in the classroom who is looking for writing assignments because she does not know exactly how to teach students to write. This is somewhat of a handbook of ideas or a syllabus, but this book is also a guide to teaching writing and its importance. Moffett does an excellent job of relating to the problems facing the writing teacher in the classroom.

THE GULF COAST CONFERENCE on the Teaching of Writing

August 8-11, 1993

The Grand Hotel*
Point Clear, Alabama

Keynote Speakers:

Monday, August 9, 1993
DAN KIRBY
University of Arizona
"Of Painters, Potters, and Architects: Learning to Teach Writing from Artists"

Tuesday, August 10, 1993
SUSAN STIRES
Center for Teaching and Learning
Edgecomb, Maine
"Writing Throughout the Curriculum"

Wednesday, August 11, 1993
GABRIELE RICO
San Jose State University
"Writing from the Heart"

Concurrent Sessions (three score and more) addressing the spectrum of writing, K-University

Concurrent Workshops (Kirby, Stires, Rico), 2:00-4:00, August 10, 1993

	Conference Schedule
2:00-5:00	**Registration (August 8)**
6:00-???	**Complimentary Lawn Party (August 8)**
7:00-8:30	**Registration (August 8-11)**
8:30-9:45	**General Session/Keynote Speakers**
9:45-10:00	**Break**
10:00-11:00	**Concurrent Sessions**
11:00-12:00	**Concurrent Sessions**
12:00-1:00	**Concurrent Sessions**
1:00-???	**Recreation/Relaxation**
4:00-5:00	**High Tea around the fireplace**
6:30-???	**Complimentary International Buffet (August 9)**
2:00-4:00	**Concurrent Workshops-Kirby, Stires, Rico-(Tuesday, August 10, only)**

"Grand" Recreation & Fellowship: 36 hole golf course, tennis, jogging, swimming, sailing, nature trails, motor and yacht historic tours, local crafts, fabulous Gulf Coast seafood meals, dancing under the stars.

*Arrangements for lodging (special conference rate for up to four persons) should be made directly with the Grand Hotel (1-800-544-9933) before July 8.

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REGISTRATION (2:00-5:00/AUGUST 8; 7:00-8:30/AUGUST 9-11)

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ACTE to You

by Ann Boozer, President

On behalf of the board of directors of ACTE, I want to give a warm welcome to Dr. David Chapman of Samford University, our new editor. He takes over from Dr. Isabelle Thompson of Auburn University who has nurtured our journal through its beginning. I continue to be excited about the consistently high quality of our *Alabama English* journal. We are so fortunate to have enthusiastic contributors and talented leadership.

After attending an NCTE leadership conference in Memphis on February 21 -22, and seeing something of what other state organizations are doing, I am extremely proud of our ACTE and its accomplishments. Through our meetings and publications we are giving real support to teachers of language arts in Alabama. It is my hope that we will continue to grow in coming years. If you are not yet a member of ACTE, please join us.

We are already at work planning our annual Fall Conference. The 1993 conference will be held at Samford University in Birmingham in October. This year we will offer an afternoon workshop with Linda Rief of Oyster Bay, New Hampshire, called by Nancy Atwell "the best middle school teacher in the country," and author of Seeking Diversity. She is the chair of the Standards Committee for National Certification in Middle School Language Arts. If you would like to attend, simply join ACTE and you will receive information. If you have a presentation in mind, you may use the form on the last page of this journal to submit a proposal. All inquiries about the program should be addressed to:

Dr. Mary Ann Tighe
204 Merrily Drive
Troy, AL 36801

We look forward to seeing you this fall.

Proposal for ACTE Fall Conference

October 8-9, 1993

Presenter: ______________________ School: ______________

Home Address: ______________________________________

Zip: ______________ Phone: ______________

Names of additional presenters, if appropriate:

Presenter: ______________________ School: ______________

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Presenter: ______________________ School: ______________

Home Address: ______________________________________

Zip: ______________ Phone: ______________

Title of workshop: ______________________________________

Appropriate grade levels: ________________________________

Brief Description: _______________________________________

____

Chair: __________________________ School: ______________

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ALABAMA ENGLISH

Spring 1994

Volume 6

A Publication of the
Alabama Council of Teachers of English
in cooperation with Samford University.

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ALABAMA ENGLISH

A Publication of the Alabama Council of Teachers of English
in cooperation with Samford University 's
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Submissions: *Alabama English* welcomes manuscripts from 1250 to 4000 words long about current theory and practice in the teaching of reading, writing, and literature at any grade level; manuscripts approximately 1000 words long as "teaching tips"; short poems that are directly related to teaching and other professional experiences; and short essays approximately 250 words long about professional concerns. All manuscripts should be typed double space, and three copies should be submitted. For return of manuscript, enclose a self-addressed envelope with stamps attached by a paper clip. Send submissions to David W. Chapman, Editor, *Alabama English*, S. U. Box 2207, Samford University, Birmingham, Alabama 35229.

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Volume 6 **Spring 1994**

ALABAMA ENGLISH

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Editor's Introduction

David W. Chapman

A few years ago Allan Bloom suggested the one basic question we might ask of any student: "What books really count for you?" Sadly, Bloom found that for many students no books readily came to mind. His students had read and studied books. They had written about them on examinations. But for most students, few books had really mattered to them. They had seen their reading, and perhaps education in general, as an academic exercise without personal meaning.

Bloom's panacea for the cultural blight he lamented in The *Closing of the American Mind* was a return to the "Great Books" of western civilization. However, Bloom admitted that these books were not representative of all the cultures and traditions in America. He felt, however, that the universal values of these books outweighed these limitations.

Bloom wrote his book near the beginning of the "Culture Wars" that have raged for the last decade. Many critics have been quick to point out that to limit the canon to the classics is to exclude many writers who will speak for contemporary students, particularly the marginalized and the disenfranchised. They have argued that the canon must not remain unchanging and inflexible—that there are other stories that must be told, other traditions that must be celebrated.

In this issue of *Alabama English*, Mary Ann Tighe and Phyllis Talmadge recommend contemporary works that allow students to hear voices that have long stood on the periphery of our literature. For the teacher who wishes to go beyond the traditional canon, Tighe and Talmadge explore quality reading selections for young adults that raise important questions about our culture.

As well as expanding the canon, Tighe and Talmadge suggest ways of engaging students in reading through their own writing. They encourage students to think of literature not as self sufficient artifacts, but as works that require a reader's response—a response that might include creative as well as critical responses to literature.

Janet Stanford also explores the connection between reading and writing in her article "Caged Birds in L.A." Occasionally, all of us find our students wanting to connect to a moment in history that challenges all of our unexamined assumptions. The Rodney King trial and its aftermath raised questions not only about our judicial system, but the role of education in preparing students for an American society that seems less stable than ever. The riots in L.A., like the earthquakes, indicated that below the surface stability of the city were tensions that were liable to erupt at any moment. And most urban dwellers in America knew that their cities were perhaps built on racial relationships just as unstable as those in L.A. Stanford explores ways that students can be encouraged to talk openly about their feelings through their reading and writing.

Don Nilsen's article on Milton may seem a strange interloper among these calls for teaching noncanonical literature. However, Nilsen's article reminds us that Milton has not always been considered either dull or humorless, and how students perceive the Milton may have more to do with the way he is taught than with the quality of Milton's verse.

Finally, Bonnie Siler reports on the most nontraditional writing of all—the students' own work. For years teachers have talked about student writing only to denigrate it. Through the Young Authors conferences, teachers have found ways to recognize and celebrate the writing of their students. Students are being made to feel a part of the community of writers instead of being constantly treated as inferior to "real" writers.

As always, *Alabama English* encourages teachers to participate in the community of writers. We are always eager to receive teaching tips, professional concerns, and other expressions of your ideas. If you would be interested in doing a book review, please contact us. We often have books waiting to be reviewed. We want to encourage all of our readers to become our writers as well.

Reading and Writing BEYOND the Curriculum: Using Young Adult, Women's, and Minority Literature to Develop Literacy Skills

Mary Ann Tighe and Phyllis Talmadge
Troy State University

"Too many of the students who leave our schools are book haters and functional illiterates" (Tchudi and Mitchell 111). This quotation is from a text on the teaching of high school English, and most English and language arts teachers in Alabama would probably agree that it is an accurate description of too many of our high school graduates. However, classroom teachers are not alone in their concerns regarding the reading abilities and reading interests of our students. The Alabama State Department of Education has incorporated a new rule into its standards for the preparation of teachers of English and Language Arts. Each college and university must now ensure that its graduates are prepared to teach not only English, American, and world literature but also "literature for youth/adolescents and works by female and minority authors" (Alabama SDE 2). We believe that there is an important connection between the Tchudi/Mitchell assertion, classroom teachers' concerns and the State Department rule, and that we can address the literacy problem by expanding the literary canon and by developing a range of response skills, both oral and written.

When we teachers of English and language arts establish our goals, one of our primary objectives is the development of literacy skills that move beyond the basics of comprehension and transcription. We want our students to enjoy reading, to respond aesthetically to literature, and to recognize the universality of the classics. And we want them to be competent writers who possess not only a command of mechanics and usage but also the ability to use writing to learn and to explore their own ideas and to communicate effectively with a public audience. Combining reading with writing about literature is an effective way to develop these competencies. However, too often students refuse to read the text or they may read it in a superficial way, focusing entirely on literal comprehension, hoping to remember the correct answer for a multiple-choice test. According to Kahn et al., when students are asked to write about the literature, they rarely move beyond summary or paraphrase, and, if they venture to suggest an interpretation or make an evaluation, they offer little or no evidence to support their claims (1-2).

The solution to this problem often lies in the selection of texts outside the traditional literary canon—texts which encourage students to make connections with their own lives, texts which enable them to find pleasure in the act of reading. Robert Carlsen, author of *Books and the Teen-Age Reader*, reminds us that teens use literature in their search for identity. This may not be what English teachers see as the function of literature, "but, it is a phase that teenagers must go through if they are to keep reading" (13). As they move into junior high or through the middle school years, they are beginning to seek independence from parents and are coming under the influence of peers. They are coping with physiological changes; they are concerned about being too tall, too thin, or too fat. They are establishing relationships with the opposite sex, seeking vocation, and establishing value systems. And these are the issues they want to read about (Carlsen 13-19). Yet, too often in our classrooms, we ask students to struggle with books that have little connection with their own lives.

Incorporating young adult, women's, and minority literature into the classroom is one way of meeting the interests of our increasingly diverse school population. But there is another aspect to literacy. If we want students to begin analyzing and evaluating literature, we must first teach them how to talk about and then how to write about the literature on these levels. Robert Probst argues that not all writing in response to literature must be limited to literary analysis. He suggests that students have three options:

(1) writing from the literature—where a personal response evoked by the text, perhaps a journal entry, becomes the basis of a public essay;

(2) writing of the literature—where students respond creatively writing their own poems, drama, or short stories, and

(3) writing about the literature—where students compose a more traditional literary analysis, interpreting or evaluating the literature (118-126).

Therefore, as one way to develop literary skills, we can integrate young adult literature into the secondary curriculum. This literature reflects the interests and concerns of teenage readers and offers a wide selection of books written by women and minority authors. Because this literature is likely to reflect their own lives and problems, it provides a way of engaging students' interest; and, because many of the books are well written, they offer a source for the development of reading, discussion, and writing skills. For examples, we will look at three young adult novels, recognizing their appeal to teenage readers, and consider various ways of responding to literature. It is worth noting, though it should not be surprising, that all three novels were written by women, two of whom are African-Americans.

Sue Ellen Bridgers is an award-winning author, noted for her excellent characterization of both young people and adults. Her first novel, *Home before Dark*, is the story of a family of migrant workers. It begins with the family traveling by car to North Carolina. James Earl Willis is bringing his family back to the town and the house where he grew up. As a young man, he had left home, joined the army, married Mae, and slipped into the gypsy-like lifestyle of an itinerant farm worker. James Earl and Mae have four children who have never known any home other than the dilapidated old car which carries them from one farm to another. Stella Willis is fourteen, their oldest child, and the focus of the story.

James Earl's younger brother Newton has remained in North Carolina and turned the family farm into a prosperous business. Now, after 16 years, James Earl suddenly reappears. With no hesitation, Newton and his wife Anna welcome them, take them in, give them work on the farm and a place to live. It is only a small tenant house, but Stella is captivated by her first real home.

Years of traveling have given Stella a self confidence and maturity beyond her 14 years, and two boys are attracted to her—Toby, the son of another tenant farmer, and Rodney Biggers, a city boy with a car, fashionable clothes, and a good allowance which he spends freely on Stella. But while Stella is learning to love the land and her house and is beginning to recognize and enjoy the power she has over the two boys, her mother is bitterly unhappy. Mae feels ill at ease and misses the nomadic life. Before she can convince James Earl to leave, she is struck and killed by a flash of lightning. Not long after her death, James Earl meets and courts an old acquaintance, Maggie Grover, the owner of the local store. When they decide to marry and live in Maggie's big house in the center of town, Stella refuses to leave the little tenant house, the only home that she has known. But slowly she comes to realize that it is her family, not just a house, that is important, and she rejoins James Earl and Maggie with her younger brothers and sisters.

As in much traditional literature, Stella faces three basic conflicts: the protagonist (1) against self, (2) against another person, and (3) against society. First, she has conflicts within herself. She likes Toby, and she recognizes his many admirable qualities: he is intelligent, courteous, and loyal. But her sense of social superiority as a Willis holds her back and draws her toward Rodney, a much weaker and flawed character. Secondly, Stella does not hesitate to engage in conflicts with other people. When her mother wants no part of their new home, Stella takes over and makes it her own. A furious Stella dismisses Rodney when she learns of the betting which he arranged for Toby. And when Maggie gently tries to win Stella's acceptance as her father's wife, Stella holds back until she feels ready to make the change. But Stella's biggest conflict is with society and the role thrust upon her as member of a migrant farm worker family. She refuses to accept this life, and when her father offers her a way out, she takes the opportunity and establishes herself quickly in a new life style. The traditional conflicts which Stella faces are the conflicts with which young readers can identify, and, if Carlsen is correct, it is a book they will enjoy. And based upon contemporary literary criticism, it is a book well worth reading, discussing, and writing about in the English classroom.

Bridger's novel is a good source for the first category of writing identified by Probst—writing from literature. Because it reflects the contemporary lives and conflicts of young adults, it is likely to evoke a personal response where students are reminded of similar experiences and feelings. Journal entries where students make connections with their own experiences and observations are a good place to begin such writing. After reading about Stella's dilemmas, students might write journal entries about times when they were misunderstood by adults. Such an entry might later be developed into a public essay on the generation gap.

Another young adult novelist whose work has universal appeal is Virginia Hamilton, an African-American author who has earned both national and international acclaim. *Sweet Whispers, Brother Rush* is a realistic fantasy in which two teenagers, Theresa and Dabny Sweet, living in relative isolation in an inner-city apartment, are visited by the ghost of their uncle, the Brother Rush of the title. In most traditional fantasy there is a transition into a new world. A tornado carried Dorothy to the land of Oz, Alice fell down the rabbit hole into Wonderland, the four children in the C.S. Lewis chronicles entered Narnia through a wardrobe, and Theresa and Dabney are drawn into a new world which Brother Rush holds in his hand. However, there is one important difference which distinguishes this book from a traditional fantasy. Theresa and Dabney do not enter a make-believe world; they enter into their own past, their early childhood, where they learn about secrets long hidden, secrets of child abuse and a serious hereditary disease which runs throughout their family. It is this knowledge of the past which enables Theresa to cope with the problems of the present.

The novel could be used to stimulate Probst's second category—writing of literature.

Students might be encouraged to try a creative response: rewrite the ending of the novel, adapt the novel into a play, or create a short story with a new fantasy world. Anderson and Rubano's text, *Enhancing Aesthetic Reading and Response*, offers many suggestions for "writing literary texts rather than expository texts in response to literature" (37).

Another novel which has become a standard for younger readers is *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* by Mildred Taylor. It is the story of the Logans, a black family struggling to survive in Mississippi in the 1930s. The narrator is 12-year-old Cassie Logan. Growing up with a strong and loving family, Cassie has no feelings of inferiority or timidity, and she comes of age during one strife-filled year. When she enters a local store and the owner waits on all the white customers first, she points out this inequity and is quickly removed from the store. Outside, when she accidentally bumps into Lillian Jean Simms, a white girl, Lillian Jean demands an apology, while her father threatens Cassie with physical harm. Just then her grandmother, Big Ma, appears and insists that Cassie apologize. Cassie does so, but she is humiliated and angry with her grandmother, for she does not realize the implications or the danger of this encounter.

Other tribulations of blacks in general and the Logan family in particular are vividly portrayed. The black children walk to their segregated school, and, as they do, the school bus carrying the white children deliberately forces them off the road and splatters them with mud. The Logan children learn of two black men who are doused with gasoline and burned for speaking to a white woman, and after hearing stories about Night Riders, they live in fear that their family will be visited in the middle of the night. Cassie's father is ambushed and badly injured when he organizes a boycott of the local grocery store. And at the end of the novel, the Logans burn their own crops to save their friend TJ from being lynched for a murder he did not commit. But through it all, the reader knows that this family will survive, and they do in the two novels which continue the saga of the Logans: *Let the Circle Be Unbroken* and *The Road to Memphis*.

After first working through a personal response to Taylor's novel, students might be taught to develop a literary analysis focusing on character motivation. A good way to initiate a discussion of motivation is to introduce Lawrence Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development (see Figure 1). Although Kohlberg suggests these stages as a psychological model, they can be used effectively by English teachers to develop discussion questions which ask students to move beyond comprehension; first the students interpret, and then they support their interpretations with evidence. The first stage in Kohlberg's model, is "preconventional behavior." Students are asked to cite examples from the text where they see characters acting mainly out of self-interest. Then, as a critically important second step, they are asked to offer evidence from the text to support their interpretation. The same procedure is followed for the second stage, "conventional behavior." Students identify incidents where characters act and react based upon their relationships with others. For the third stage, "post-conventional behavior," they look for actions where characters are motivated by their own sense of justice. At each stage, students must move beyond the literal events in the novel and determine the character's motives before they can select the appropriate stage. This exercise is likely to evoke differences of opinion and much discussion. For example, when Big Ma forces Cassie to apologize, is she functioning at a preconventional level, trying to avoid punishment, or is she on a conventional level, simply following the rules of the society of that time? Although there is no right or wrong answer, students must go back to the novel and offer concrete evidence to support their interpretations. Such a prewriting discussion prepares them for Probst's third category of writing—writing about literature.

Whatever the writing assignment, the key is first finding good literature that students will read and enjoy. We believe that young adult literature provides one such source. Reed and Gerlach conducted a survey of preservice and inservice English teachers enrolled in the course "Fiction for Adolescents." They wanted to determine the literary merit of selected young adult novels. *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* was the highest ranking novel in their top category of "High Literary Merit." Bridgers' novel, *Home Before Dark*, also earned a high ranking, but too few responses were received to include this novel in the final analysis (52-55). But, most importantly, students as well as teachers respond in a positive way to these novels.

After reading *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, a class of Alabama middle school students responded in writing. Their teacher encouraged them to look for strengths and weaknesses in the novel, and one student replied:

> I really wasn't paying attention to the novel's strengths and weaknesses. I read a book for a quality storyline. I'll try to answer the question. The strengths of the book are its looks on racism. The things in the book really did happen to Black people and I am glad that there are people who are willing to write about part of the Black history. . . .
>
> This book didn't have any weaknesses to me. The book touched me because you really start to worry about what happens to Cassie, Stacey and Little Man. I think books like this should help the black culture understand their trials and triumphs because we

Post-Conventional (Centers on universal principles of right or wrong)

5. Contractual Legalistic Orientation
    - Follows rules that govern society as a whole rather than special interest groups
    - Can change rules through socially accepted procedures
    - Focuses on human rights and dignity
6. Conscience or Principle Orientation
    - Motivated by integrity, honest with oneself and others, unconditional love and self-sacrifice

Conventional (Relationships with others)

3. Interpersonal concordance Orientation
    - To be socially accepted, must do deeds that please others; peer groups are important
4. Authority and Social-Order Maintaining Orientation
    - Obey society's rules out of duty or obligation; put social order over personal feelings

Preconventional (Self-interest)

1. Obedience and Punishment Orientation
    - Fear of punishment, do whatever is needed to avoid it.
2. Instrumental Relativist Orientation
    - Based on meeting own needs rather than adhering to principles
    - Involves manipulating others to meet own needs

Figure 1. Lawrence Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development

(Keller, Rodney D. "Robert Cormier and Kohlberg's Levels of Morality." *The Leaflet: Journal of the New England Association of Teachers of English* 84.2 (1985): 21-28.)

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won't know where we are going if we don't know where we've been. Their teacher recommends the book and recognizes its potential for engaging students' interest:

> Students express very thoughtful and meaningful ideas as they become more involved in the plot and the character development of Cassie and the other characters . . . . every student was very much involved—formulating thoughts of their own—disputing/agreeing with the thoughts of others—for perhaps the first time, how prejudice has evolved and continues to be ever present.

Such teacher and student responses affirm our claim that young adult literature motivates reader interest and provides a source for meaningful discussion and writing. Teachers interested in incorporating young adult literature into the curriculum may consult journals published by the National Council of Teachers of English for book reviews and teaching strategies: The ALAN REVIEW is published three times a year and focuses solely on young adult literature, the English Journal for secondary teachers and Language Arts for elementary teachers include articles on children's and young adult literature in most issues.

Another source of literature that deserves attention in the high school curriculum is women's literature. Approximately half of our students are female, yet "Ninety percent. . . of the main characters" in the literature now taught are male, and if female characters are represented, they are usually depicted in "family or romantic situations" (Carlson N. pag.). Just as there are few primary characters who are female, the most commonly used anthologies in high school classes contain works that are, for the most part, written by men. In examining five frequently used anthologies, Barbara G. Pace discovered that the largest number of writers are white men, who outnumber white women writers by four-to-one and black men by six-to-one. In the texts examined by Ms. Pace, she discovered that only four black women writers were included (33). Obviously, the need exists to provide in the curriculum more selections written about and by women if we as teachers believe that "role models in books, as in real life, make an important difference to readers' lives" (Carlson N. pag.). Female readers should not regularly be asked to adopt a masculine perspective, nor should they routinely read about women who are "physically weak and passive" (Pace 35). Both male and female readers in our schools should experience the heritage of their literary mothers as well as their literary fathers.

Some Alabama teachers already incorporate women's' literature into their English classrooms. For example, one eleventh grade English teacher in a large South Alabama high school will be teaching a women's literature unit for the third consecutive year this spring. Her thematic unit usually includes short stories, poetry, and one novel by or about American women. When asked about the success of this unit, the teachers said that it is one of the most exciting parts of the course for all of her students. They enjoy examining a "neglected portion of their heritage" because it gives them new insights and a new perspective. One would imagine that the female students would enjoy reading their "literary mothers," but male students respond positively as well. Male students indicate in their reading logs and in class discussion that the women's literature has enhanced their understanding of their mothers, sisters, girlfriends, and even themselves because they think "women writers are deeply reflective, personal, and sympathetic." One male student says that women "write from the heart." Another male student who transferred into this South Alabama classroom and who had previously studied American literature chronologically during the first semester says that he was absolutely unenthusiastic about early American literature but found these early writers (specifically Bradstreet and Dickinson) exciting when they were paired with contemporary poets in the thematic women's literature unit in his new school. If a teacher is excited about teaching previously neglected literature—whether women's or multi-cultural—students are more likely to be excited, too. If the teacher is hesitant to teach it, students will be hesitant as well.

The inclusion of works by and about women need not result in a feminism course, but all students will benefit from literature that performs the following rules:

1. SERVES AS A FORUM FOR WOMEN (Literature should be honest and forthright. It must present women's experience not filtered through the male eye; women must not feel obligated to write autobiography but rather to write about myths growing out of their lives. Women must express female experience authentically and totally.)

2. BRINGS ABOUT ANDROGYNY (Emphasis must be placed on values that are important to society, both male and female. For example, courage should be equally associated with female as with the male.)

3. PROVIDES POSITIVE ROLE MODELS FOR READERS (Heroines must have identities not necessarily dependent on men. They must be self-actualizing.

4. BE CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING (Works should give realistic insights into the female personality development, self-perception, interpersonal relationships and other private or internal consequences of sexism.) (Register 19-24)

Once we teachers decide to incorporate women's literature into the English curriculum, the question arises, "What books contain a variety of genre written by women?" One of the most outstanding collections for the teacher's use in gaining an overview of women's literature and examining numerous pieces of women's literature is the *Norton Anthology of Literature by Women* (Gilbert and Gubar 1985), which offers a wealth of material from the Middle Ages to the Modern Period. In addition to poetry, essays, and short stories by writers as diverse as Doris Lessing, Eudora Welty, Elizabeth Barrett-Browning, Flannery O'Connor, Alice Walker, Maya Angelou, Joyce Carol Oates, May Sarton, Virginia Woolf, and numerous others, it also includes three complete novels: *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte, *The Awakening* by Kate Chopin, and The *Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison. Though this text would not be appropriate for high school classrooms, it is invaluable as a resource book for the teacher. Another work, *By Women* (Folsom and Kirschner 1975), might be examined for use with high school students. Numerous paperbacks containing individual novels or collections of short stories might also be considered as supplementary texts to accompany state-approved anthologies. *Rediscoveries: American Short Stories by Women: 1800-1916* (Barbara Solomon 1993) and *We Are the Best Stories We Tell: The Best Short Stories by North American Women Since 1945* (Wendy Martin 1994) are recent collections of short stories worth considering. Teachers may also consult the *Annotated Backlist Catalog 1993-1994: Preschool through Young Adult* for extensive suggestions for student reading. Note especially books indexed under the sub-heading "Women and Girls: A Positive Image."

Having chosen texts, the teachers will need to remember that women's writings may differ from men's in genre, tone, and content. Therefore, students may need guidance in these areas. For example, popular with early women writers were journals, diaries, and letters. These short, personal works suited well the women writer because the demands of her environment, her children, and her husband left little time for longer, more formal writing. When women did begin to publish, they often continued to write in epistolary form in such works as *Evelina* by Fanny Burney. Even the modern writer, Lee Smith, has used this form in her *Fair and Tender Ladies*. Sometimes women's journals were not used for their own publications but found their way into literature written by male relatives. For example, William Wordsworth made use of his sister Dorothy's notebooks to write some of the most beautiful Romantic poetry in the English language. Often women writers give a new perspective to an old form. In her *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, Elizabeth Barrett-

Browning recorded her love affair and marriage to her husband Robert from the female perspective. Edna St. Vincent Millay in her *Sonnets from an Ungrafted Tree* revealed a sense of duty to her dying lover for whom she has little real devotion. Looking at the sonnet through the eyes of these two women writers gives students a wider dimension of the familiar form, but we may need help to contrast these sonnets with those of Shakespeare or Wordsworth.

Likewise, the novel in the feminine hand presents a new perspective on the lives of women. It may interest students of both sexes to read the familiar classic, *Jane Eyre,* not only as a love story but also as an early novel of protest attacking the limited educational and vocational choices of nineteenth century women and pleading for equality in marriage. To read it in this way is to gain new insights previously unexplored. Coupling this classic novel with Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea,* which examines the perspective of the mad woman, Bertha Mason, would be an intriguing experience in "re-vision." In reading another novel, Chopin's *The Awakening,* students will feel Edna's frustration as she seeks to be herself rather than a piece of valuable property to her husband. And in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye,* students will become deeply aware of both anger and humor in the lives of three little black girls seeking to make sense of their world.

The short story also reveals experiences through the woman's eye. Zora Neal Hurston's "Sweat" powerfully depicts the courage of one black woman trying to protect her home from her own husband when he tries to wrest it from her and attempts to kill her for it. Another experience seen through a woman's eye is mental illness/depression in Charlotte Gilman's classic, "The Yellow Wallpaper." Mary Ward Brown, a contemporary Southern writer, offers insight into the New South as well as characters developed with compassion and understanding in her award-winning collection of short stories, *Tongues of Flame.*

These differences (genre, tone, and content) become sharper and more perceptible as we read more and more of women's work, and consider our own responses; that is, whether we like it or not, and why. To our ears accustomed to the voice of male writers, women's voices at the other side of the range may sound strange at first. The differences raise many issues concerning literary criticism and standards of judgment, and these can lead us and our students into new critical positions. (Carlson N. pag.)

To lead students into new critical positions, we may incorporate women's literature into the curriculum by pairing works to represent gender points-of-view that can be compared and contrasted:

1. Essays by Margaret Fuller and Ralph Waldo Emerson
2. Short stories about the South by Mary Ward Brown or Eudora Welty and William Faulkner
3. Regional or local color stories by Sarah Orne Jewett and Brett Harte
4. Sonnets by Elizabeth Barrett-Browning and William Shakespeare
5. Stories of journey motifs by Maya Angelou and Ralph Ellison

Other workable suggestions for enhancing the curriculum with the feminist perspective include the following:

1. Use a familiar work like *Pride and Prejudice* but teach it as a means to provide a forum for women, bringing about androgyny, presenting positive role models for women, and being consciousness-raising.
2. Teach a "horror" unit using female writers like Mary Shelley, Shirley Jackson, Anne Rice, and Flannery O'Connor.
3. Teach a unit on authors from your state including both men and women.
4. Contrast plot, language, style, tone, theme, etc., in companion pieces written by male/female authors.
5. Use two works with surprise endings (one by a female and one by a male) and examine their effectiveness.
6. Assign historical research to show how a work resulted from problems of the time. This assignment would be appropriate with "a woman's place" in the 19th century when women had few vocations open to them, women could not own property in their own rights, women could not vote, and women could not claim custody of their children in the event of a divorce.

Of course, these ideas are only a springboard, a beginning for adding new dimensions to the English/language arts classroom.

There is a richness in women's literature that teachers may not have tapped for their "resisting readers." Remembering that half of the students enrolled in secondary schools are female, we teachers must find appropriate reading material to which these young women can connect. Whether the literature chosen is classic or contemporary is not the issue. Getting students to read and to respond to what they read is the issue. We have too long deplored the fact "students . . . leave our schools (as) book haters and functional illiterates" (Tchudi and Mitchell 111). It is time to select texts that will interest them, encourage them to make connections with their own lives, and enable them to find pleasure in the act of reading—whether they are reading novels like Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*, Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, Marion Zimmer Bradley's *The Mists of Avalon*, Jean Auel's *Clan of the Cave Bear*, Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Sue

Ellen Bridgers' *Home Before Dark*, or Virginia Hamilton's *Sweet Whispers, Brother Rush;* short stories by Eudora Welty, Alice Munro, or Sarah Orne Jewett; poetry by Edna St. Vincent Millay, Adrienne Rich, or Gwendolyn Brooks. In the English classroom, there should be something for everyone. If we expand the canon to include young adult, minority, and women's literature, we may find that we are developing literate students who are discovering that it is indeed "exhilarating to be alive in a time of awakening consciousness" (Rich 2045).

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Annotated Bibliography of Young Adult Literature by Women and Minority Authors

Angelou, Maya. I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings. Autobiography of a young black girl growing up in a small segregated town in Arkansas.

Bridgers, Sue Ellen. Home before Dark. After growing up in a family of migrant workers, Stella refuses to leave her first real home even though it may mean losing her family ties.

——. Notes from Another Life. Wren's parents are separated. She must decide if she should follow her mother's example and pursue a career or be like her grandmother and build a strong and loving family.

Cisneros, Sandra. The House on Mango Street. A young Hispanic girl sees her writing as a way out of poverty.

Dorris, Michael. Yellow Raft on Blue Water. Three generations of Indian women must decide how to cope with the obstacles and hardships in their lives.

Fox, Paula. Slave Dancer. Jessie, kidnapped and taken aboard a slave ship, is forced to play his fife while the slaves exercise, but he refuses to become a part of the evil that surrounds him.

Greene, Bette. The Summer of My German Soldier. Patty Bergen, a Jew, decides to befriend a German POW during World War II.

Hamilton, Virginia. M. C. Higgins, the Great. M. C. Wants his family to leave their mountain home, but his father refuses to abandon the place where his ancestors first found freedom.

——. Sweet Whispers, Brother Rush. Tree (Theresa) learns to survive in the present by reliving scenes from her childhood.

Ho, Minfong. Rice without Rain. Jinda, growing up in Thailand, is caught in the conflict between old and new worlds.

Paterson, Katherine. Jacob, Have I Loved. Louise Bradshaw assumes she must live in the shadow of her beautiful and talented sister, Caroline, until she decides to take control of her own life.

Voight, Cynthia. David and Jonathan. Henry Marr's friendship with Jonathan Nafiche takes on new dimensions when Jonathan's cousin David, a Holocaust survivor, arrives in America.

Sequels and Series in Young Adult Literature

Mildred Taylor and the Logan Family:

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry. Cassie Logan grows up in Mississippi in the 1930s. Her strong and loving family sustains her during a strife-filled year.

Let the Circle Be Unbroken. As Cassie and her brothers mature, they continue their struggle against social and economic barriers.

The Road to Memphis. Cassie is seventeen, and World War II is about to begin as she and her brother face danger when they decide to help a friend.

Cynthia Voight and the Tillerman Family:

Homecoming. When their mother disappears, the Tillerman children refuse to be separated. Led by Dicey, the oldest, they find a new home and a new life.

Dicey's Song. Dicey learns to cope with school, friends, family relationships, and finally, with the death of her mother.

A Solitary Blue. Jeff Greene, abandoned by his mother raised by his father, comes to terms with his own self worth and establishes a relationship with Dicey.

The Runner. "Bullet" Tillerman was Dicey's uncle. As a young man he established a record as a track star, but he could not accept his father's authoritarian ways and his mother's acquiescence.

Come a Stranger. Dicey's friend, Mina Smith, is an African-American who, despite her talent, is not accepted by the other girls at a ballet camp.

Sons from Afar. Dicey's brothers, James and Sammy, decide to search for their father, the man who abandoned them many years before.

Seventeen against the Dealer. Dicey is willing to sacrifice everything—family, friends, education, and love—to achieve her goal. But she learns that building boats is not all she wants and needs.

Annotated Bibliography of Women's Literature

Brown, Mary Ward Brown. Tongues of Flame. New York: E. P. Dutton/Seymour Lawrence, 1986.

A collection of 11 stories, all set in the "New South" following the civil right's legislation.

Ferguson, Mary Anne, ed. Images of Women in Literature. 4th ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1986.

A collection of more than 70 authors presenting images of women associated with their biological roles, images of women seeking to transcend their traditional roles, and women's images of themselves.

Folsom, M. M., and L. H. Kirschner, eds. By Women: An Anthology of Literature. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1975.

Collection contains short stories, dramas, and poetry primarily from the modern period and is not as inclusive as the Norton Anthology, but it would be appropriate for use on the high school level.

Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar, eds. The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Tradition in English. New York: W. W. Norton, 1985.

Book is often used for courses in women's literature on the college level. It is comprehensive and includes literature written from the Middle Ages to the Modern Period. In addition to excellent introductions to literary periods and an explanation of woman's place in each period, it contains all genre including three complete novels: Jane Eyre, The Awakening, and The Bluest Eye.

La Pieta

Michael J. Virga

a blue troubadour
is rock'd
deep into the arms
of scarlette

as if held close
to the heart
of a sterling purple haze

and now when the night is errant
torn starless

he remembers how good
it can be
they remember the melody

and their music still keeps the view!

Caged Birds In L.A: Using Maya Angelou And Others to Probe Student Reactions to the Riots

Janet M. Stanford
Walker High School

The first trial of Rodney King and the resulting explosive reaction in Los Angeles have in turn evoked a variety of reactions from the rest of us. Some of these are strongly opinionated and as explosive as the riots, others troubled and vague, uncertain or obscure. Whatever the reaction, these incidents seem to have added considerable fuel to the ongoing and debilitating inferno of racial turmoil within this country. I found myself sickened and depressed by the madness, and I sensed a need for clarification of the issue within my students as well as within myself. I teach a survey of British literature to two sections of Honors English eleventh-graders. However, I sometimes include American fiction and poetry, usually contemporary, to make connections regarding theme or showing a contrast in style. I try to relate every piece of literature studied to the society and historical setting in which it was written. As the focus of the comparison often involves issues faced in American society today, the timeliness (and timelessness) of this incident as woven into the context of the Literature Unit seemed crucial to the development of my students' awareness. It also seemed an excellent opportunity for them to channel that awareness into the writing process; here was my chance to stimulate a first-class writing-to-learn endeavor. So I took Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969), assigned earlier in the semester, and finished out the year with a discussion of Angelou's writing and the L.A. riots, mixing in some Paul H. Dunbar and Langston Hughes for seasoning. I felt this study would refine our understanding of several crucial themes and conflicts we could approach through both life and literature.

It should come as no surprise to good teachers that students' appreciation and understanding of literature increases as they relate what they have read to their own lives and society. Anne Ruggles Gere reminds us:

> Learning is allowing. . . a newly discovered rock to be fitted into the wall, the construct of a student's reality. Learning may require moving some older rocks around, or even out of the wall. . . . Each

> mind picks through the rocks, quickly or slowly, to rebuild or enlarge the structure that is that person's image of the world. (162)

This "wall" of STUDENT reality, if consistently emphasized and built upon through teacher-directed activity, is the most important foundation for learning there is.

For my students, "enlarging the structure" means making connections to modern society, not only through our study of *Caged Bird*, but also through literary works from earlier historical periods, providing them with underlying structure for new ideas and connections fostered by the Angelou unit. For example, British authors George Orwell and Jonathan Swift both address the theme of oppression. In *1984*, we discussed at length Orwell's portrayal of the "proles' as poor people perceived as less than human, virtually ignored by members of the inner party who were deeply suspicious of anyone else. The proles, although products of a British author writing in 1948, might well be seen later on as a direct parallel to the plight of Angelou's oppressed. The construct is then strengthened when the connection can be made to the rioters of inner city L.A. in 1991. One further example will emphasize how other "rocks" can solidify the "wall" even more.

Months earlier, in order to bring Jonathan Swift's purpose in writing "A Modest Proposal" into focus for my students, I had them read the essay and then directed their attention to the current economic problems faced by Americans. Then I put them into groups and told them to provide their *own* non-satirical solutions to those problems, as Swift had done satirically for the Irish. As a result, these students learned something of the problems faced by Swift and his contemporaries as the kids struggled with re-appropriation of government funding, ineffective programs for the poor, and economic gridlock. They also made necessary connections: "British" themes of the 1700s to American problems of the 1990s, and later, Swift's focus on Ireland to Angelou's on L.A.

Literature is a clear reflection of the aspects of society bothersome or significant to writers. Great literature then becomes a deeply personal and direct reference to the history that goes beyond facts and figures and dates and wars. According to Mike Rose, the social historian captures the "history of moods and movements and ordinary people's lives" (4). So does the novelist or the essayist. In *Lives on the Boundary* Rose exposes his readers to the benefits of writing to learn as he takes them through his attempts to emphasize the importance of having "at risk" students (the "focus of our national panic") weave what they already know of their society into new knowledge (8-9). He also refers to teaching as a "romance" unrelated to just working with "words or a chronicle of dates or facts." He speaks of "wooing" students with these ideas, "inviting a relationship of sorts, the terms of connection being the narrative, the historical event" (102). Although my own students are on the other side of the labeling coin ("gifted" rather than "at risk"), they are no less starved for the connections between what they read and what they know. They are no less starved for teachers who lead them to make those connections in writing.

My lesson-planning for *Caged Bird* began, although I didn't realize it then, as I listened to National Public Radio's commentary on the riots one day, and heard the following quote attributed to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.: "Riot is the language of the unheard." It kept coming back and picking at my brain—I couldn't shake it. It seemed to connect directly with Angelou's wonderful, intimate autobiography, and the theme locked into its title and substance.

So one day in early May I took my honors classes outside, as promised weeks before, and we all, myself included, expressed our feelings in writing and through discussion on these hot topics of the day. There was, however, a quick preliminary activity necessary before a smooth connection could be made from the quote to the riots to Angelou's novel. By this time, everyone had finished the book and knew we would be discussing it in context with the L. A. riots. Before vacating the building that day, I wrote the novel's title on the board and we discussed it only very briefly in conjunction with the Paul Laurence Dunbar (1892-1906) poem from which it was taken:

Sympathy

I know what the caged bird feels,
  alas!
When the sun is bright on the
  upland slopes;
When the wind stirs soft through
  the springing grass
And the river flows like a stream
  of glass;
When the first bird sings and the
  first bud opes
And the faint perfume from its
  chalice steals—
I know what the caged bird feels!

I know why the caged bird beats
  his wing
Till its blood is red on the cruel
  bars;
For he must fly back to his perch
  and cling
When he fain would be on the
  bough a-swing;
And a pain still throbs in the old,
  old scars
And they pulse again with a
  keener sting—
I know why he beats his wing!

I know why the caged bird sings,
  ah me,
When his wing is bruised and his
  bosom sore,

When he beats his bars and
would be free;
It is not a carol of joy or glee,
But a prayer that he sends from
his heart's deep core,
But a plea, that upward to the
Heaven he flings—
I know why the caged bird sings!

After passing out copies of the poem, I read it aloud as they read along, and then I wrote Martin Luther King's quote on the board underneath the title of Angelou's book. Then I asked them to make a connection between one word in the title and a parallel word in the quote. Several students immediately saw one between Dunbar's use of "sing" and King's use of "unheard." And this was really the extent of our initial discussion.

"I'd like you to see if you can do a little free-writing for me while we're outside, " I said now. We had discussed this process before, but I quickly reviewed the rules with them:

1) Don't think too much (or, as Gere puts it, students should write "with almost no regard for someone reading over their shoulders" [163];
2) Keep your pencil on the paper from beginning to end so as to keep the thread of free-flowing thought unencumbered by too many pauses;
3) Write your honest feelings, not being afraid to go off on tangents at times if the urge is there;
4) Don't worry about rules of format, grammar, punctuation, etc.

I then told the class to free-write with the following considerations in mind:

1) Simply REACT to the L.A. riots;
2) If you see a connection, include your reaction to the quote by Martin Luther King, Jr.;
3) If possible, and if your inclinations lead you into it naturally, connect the quote to any theme conveyed through Angelou's novel, whether this connection deals directly with the title's significance or not.

We went outside, I reviewed the assignment again, and for about 20-25 minutes we all wrote. Then, when most of the class was completely through, I took up their papers, and read each one aloud, keeping them anonymous. After each, I asked for reactions, which made for compelling discussion in a structured fashion and may have been more effective than a less-structured "open discussion." My sixth-period class in particular benefited from listening quietly to each other's reactions; previous discussions had often led to arguments, interruptions, and chaos. It was a valuable experience, I think, for them to initially work through their reactions to the riots, the book's title, and to racial issues in general by simply writing with a few specific guidelines in mind; yet with enough left "unsaid" by their teacher and fellow classmates. This allowed each honest individual reaction to reign untempered by interruption and outside opinion.

In the course of reading their observations aloud, several compelling issues emerged, among them an interesting difference in interpretation. One group of kids felt the Reverend King's reference to riot as "the language of the unheard" conveyed the message that rioters will remain unheard by society due to their means of expression. Several within this group linked their knowledge of King as a proponent of non-violent methods of protest with this interpretation. Following this line of thought, these writers suggested that consequently, rioters are defeating their own purpose in choosing this form of protest. Sean and Janine's comments exemplify this interpretation:

- The unheard implies that riot is a useless form of expression. . . . The riots have changed nothing and have reinforced black stereotypes. MLK understood that time and education changes ideas not violence.

- Frustration is the helpless feeling that all experience. Especially Blacks who cannot rid themselves of color or the cage that this reps. in their society. The caged birds sees freedom through the bars and beats himself to get at that freedom. He still gets nowhere. He only hurts himself. In his heartrending frustration he sings. No one hears, he still remains caged. Maybe someone does, and feels the forlorn song. Maybe makes it better by uncaging the bird. But they react to the song not the bruises the bird inflicts upon itself which to them is like proof of its wildness + need of a cage.

- Frustrated people in Los Angelos bruised and bloodied themselves in their frustration. They still though, find themselves caged. Though their singing seems to have resulted in little, it is time to sing some more. Only negotiations + talk will free them. Their hurting themselves will leave them simply hurt and caged.

Another portion of free-writers felt that in spite of the fact that King abhorred violence and denounced it as a counter-productive method of being "heard," he was pointing out that when a society choked by poverty reaches the point where it can no longer breathe, any means of being heard is better than none. Mandy, Susan, Luke, Alexander and Marian reflected this line of thought to varying degrees:

- The people were right, they were heard when they rioted.

- "Sympathy" refers to a bird beating his wing 'till its blood is red on the cruel bars. This may tie into the determination of a group in a riot. They seem not to be concerned with damage done to themselves as long as the goal is achieved.

- The bird sings and beats his wing because he is himself and is special. He wants people to pay attention to him therefore he sings just as people riot to draw attention so they may be heard and can express what they feel.

- The only real freedom a bird has is his voice. He can cry for help and hope his prayers are answered. As a child, Angelou was like this. She was an intelligent black girl living in a white man's world. Everywhere she went, the odds were against her. . . As a child, Maya was helpless in all these situations, like a caged bird. her intelligence, like the bird's voice, was her only escape.

- The rioters are symbolic of the caged birds and rioting is the music we hear. The minority groups in L. A. + everywhere else have been forced to see the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. At one time America was the land of opportunity. However, for these people it is a sinking ship in the sea of recession, crime, and social injustice. The unheard of LA. . . have dreams that never come to fruition, while seeing others go on to glory. . . seeing policeman dish out the worst injustice and being pardoned for it make these people see themselves against the world, an anarchy. Rioting, looting, and other heinous crimes may seem like the only means of expression.

It was good for the kids to see that something like this could be construed in very different ways; no two "rock walls" are built the same way with the same materials. The best kind of learning occurs as individuals structure their own ideas upon those others have begun, and become aware of the way in which their peers assert their own unique constructs.

After I read their reactions aloud, anonymously, the floor was open for discussion (I shared my own reaction as well, but later, after they reacted freely to what each other had written). I also allowed some moments after the reading of each student's thoughts for brief comments which might pertain to particular points made in each. The main discussion took place, however, after all had been read. And although some of the discussion was a free-flowing reaction to what had been written, I did include a few questions to help stimulate further divergent thinking. As this was the final unit ending my survey of primarily British literature throughout the ages (Angelou, a black American, included finally as a basis for comparison of style as well as theme), I recalled for my students earlier discussions in which we addressed historical events that influenced writers throughout the world: "Has any historical situation ever echoed the L. A. riots? Can you think of other examples of uprisings reflecting a reaction to oppression through the use of violence? Can you determine the results of these uprisings? Were there any good results? What were they?" Linda said the riots reminded her of the American Revolution. Patrick said they made him think of the protests made during the late 60s against the Vietnam war and in support of civil rights. In general, students seemed willing to listen to each other's ideas with respect and careful consideration. Together and as individuals, each added new rocks to the wall.

I concluded the discussion the following day, back in our regular classroom setting. The total unit on Angelou was to include another week's work. However, the final step in this introductory lesson (a mini-unit in and of itself) addressing parallels between the concerns of this contemporary black American writer, the poet from whose poem she derived her title, King's comment, and the provocative issue of the riots, was to include one more writer. Langston Hughes' "Dream Deferred" (published 1959 under the title "Harlem") seemed a perfect conclusion to my introduction:

Dream Deferred
by Langston Hughes

What happens to a dream
deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore—
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over—
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

It didn't take much teacher-probing or lectured analyses of Hughes' similes and metaphors to enable my students to make further connections with the other writers and activists addressed. Most important, however, were the connections drawn through the ages. To question the validity of making such connections would be to question the study of literature in general. Toby Fulwiler, author of *The Journal Book*, answers this challenge with the response that through this type of learning, students find a "place in their lives for literature and the humanistic approach to life that it fosters" (102). From Chaucer to Shakespeare to Swift to Hardy to

Orwell, between these authors' times and beyond them, the problems faced by oppressed members of every society comprise a vast spectrum of theme. It is crucial that we emphasize to our students the contemporaneity of these concerns in ways meaningful and relevant to their lives and the lives around them.

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A Warm-Up Act For John Milton

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Arizona State University

When professional entertainers do a show, they often have a young performer come out and warm up the audience by telling jokes and getting people in the mood to enjoy what follows. In today's multifaceted culture, John Milton with his single minded vision needs such a warm-up. However, he's not getting it from many English teachers and critics.

For example, at the 1993 convention of the Modern Language Association in Toronto, MLA Executive Director Phyllis Franklin reported on the critical attention being given various authors by comparing the number of entries in the MLA bibliographies for 1963 (the year the index was computerized) and 1991. The point of the study was to see if traditional authors, i.e., those making up the so-called literary canon, were being ignored in favor of women and minorities. She reported that the percentage of citations referring to William Shakespeare and Charles Dickens had actually increased, while "studies of Milton remained steady." At her statement on Milton, the audience burst out laughing — undoubtedly the biggest laugh Milton has received in years. Fashions abound in literary criticism, just as much as in clothing or architecture, and at the present time it seems fashionable to consider Milton humorless. Louis Cazamian has written that Milton, both in his personal life and his writing, lacks the divided mind that is necessary for humor to flourish; there is never any "suspicion of double meaning" (Cazamian 388). Charles Ross suggests that contemporary critics typically find Milton "decidedly unfunny in his patriarchal depiction of Eve, and a current quip has it that all of God's jokes in *Paradise Lost* have to be so identified" (Ross 153). Ross goes on to suggest that *Paradise Lost* is not so much to be read, as to be taken like medicine, while Randall Jarrell has written that "the ordinary reader no longer makes the mistake of trying to read it" (Kantra 78-79). Robert Kantra also quotes Samuel Johnson's statement about *Paradise Lost*: "None ever wished it longer than it is" (76-77).

Such negative criticism has given us a mindset that Milton is a deadly serious author whose work is to be approached as a duty rather than a pleasure. But if we're going to read Milton, we need to also look at a different set of critics including Isaac Asimov, T. S.. Eliot , William Empson, John Evans, and Carolyn O'Hearn. They find in Milton's Satan a laughable, entertaining, and dramatic persona (Kantra 79). John

Evans points out that the best villains must be attractive and clever, and he gives many examples of humor in *Paradise Lost* to support his view. For example, in the debate in Hell at the beginning of Book II, the debaters sequentially make light of one another, using what they believe to be witty put-down humor in the process. There is also Satan's triumphal humor, what Evans calls "epic scorn" in Book VI, the book describing the battle in heaven in which the loyal angels are barraged by rebel cannon fire. Additionally, Evans points to the delightfully humorous section in Book VII of *Paradise Lost* in which Adam asks God for a mate, and God playfully asks Adam why he is not content to be the master of all he surveys. In Book IX, Satan makes fun of God during the temptation, all the time realizing that the joke will be on Eve if she is foolish enough to fall for his line. Finally, Evans points to Satan's humor in Book IV when he sees Adam and Eve for the first time and muses that "Hell will open wide its doors" to entertain them.

In an article entitled "Heavenly High Jinx," Barbara Steward points out that scholars have tended to interpret the heavenly battle in Milton's *Paradise Lost* as either pure satire, mock heroic satire, burlesque, or folly—the folly of war, or the folly of not having the right hero. However, she identifies many purely comic elements in this heavenly battle which she views as a mixture of the comic, the bawdy, and the profane. "Titanic mountains are heaped upon the rebels by loyal angels in response to blasts from cannon fortuitously invented by Satan." Furthermore, Satan and his company are "hurled to Hell, like a 'herd of goats.'" She also acknowledges the pursuit of the serious and the didactic, as Milton was writing in the well established Christian literary tradition. Steward points out that this blending of the comic with the serious already had a long and respected tradition even during Milton's time, a tradition that dates not only to the morality plays, but to the mysteries as well (56).

In her discussion of the ironies in *Paradise Lost*, Carolyn O'Hearn agrees with Steward's position. One of the ironies that O'Hearn cites is Milton's depiction of Satan as the hero of *Paradise Lost*. Clearly the portrait of Satan is artistically superior to the portraits of God or Christ in *Paradise Lost*.

> It is usually said that Milton makes Satan to be a very magnificent creature in the first two books of *Paradise Lost*, [and] that through the rest of the poem Satan degenerates, and that the misreading of Satan's role results from the fact that Milton made his creation so magnificent in the first two books that no subsequent degeneration can remove the earlier images from our minds. (61)

The Satan of the first two books is

impressive in three respects: He is huge; he is a military leader and a monarch to the devils; and he is a magnificent speaker. Satan is described in terms of a Leviathan, a tower, and a fleet of ships. He is a commander and an emperor. Satan's armies were disciplined and united, and he was an eloquent speaker. According to O'Hearn, these facts demonstrate not that Milton was on Satan's side, but that he wanted to teach that vanity and public adoration can trap a person into believing that he is more than he is. To support her contention that Milton is employing irony, O'Hearn points to the negative references that describe Satan: He is called the "fiend," and the "author of all ill," and the "antagonist of heaven," and the "adversary of God and Man."

> The symmetry of *Paradise Lost* is so balanced that both the first reference, Book I, line 34, and the last, Book X, line 580, are to Satan as the serpent. . . . Milton finishes up Satan in Book X with such references as the "Prince of the Air," the "Prince of Darkness," and the "great adventurer." (62)

According to O'Hearn, before *Paradise Lost* no satisfactory portrait of Satan had existed. Rather, there was the hump-backed, cloven-hoofed creature of earlier descriptions, a figure too tawdry and insignificant to be a worthy adversary to God. She notes that since Milton's time, the Satan in the Sunday sermons and in the popular literature throughout the world has been derived from Milton rather than from the numerous other religious sources (62).

In a chapter of his *All Things Vain: Religious Satirists and Their Art*, entitled "Miltonic and Other Utopias," Robert Kantra contrasts Milton's utopia with the utopias of science-fiction or futuristic writers. Although the depiction of both types of utopias can appear satirical, in his view only the Miltonic satire is truly satiric because only the Miltonic satire is based on a clear conception of the good and bad qualities of utopia. "Milton's distinction between 'grave and noble invention' and 'this world of evil'" blurs and is lost in much futuristic writing (76). Kantra mocks the "unintentional satire" of such fiction which reads "like jokes, or at least word-games." He quotes a typical passage: "There is no real difference between a hammer and a spaceship, no real difference either between the invention of fire and that of the steam engine." He finds that "machinery has always had uses in utopia that border on hilarity, in the sense that physics and metaphysics have contradictory referents and different languages" (90). Kantra concludes that only Miltonian satire is true satire. Milton knew what utopia was, and what it was not.

F. McD. C. Turner considers Milton, at first one of the gentlest and most melodious of the lyrical poets, to have become one of the fiercest, most bitter of the English pamphleteers. He further suggests that Milton caricatures what happened in England as a whole. During Milton's time the Puritan tragedy was enacted in miniature; the rule of saints was destined to fail because they were in a perpetual minority and weakened by dissensions among themselves (21). Thus, Milton's *Paradise Lost* was true to the poet's time and place.

> It is, on the whole, incomplete and unrestrained, because it lacks the sure foundation of an adequate *casus belli*; and the wrath behind it, being an unreasonable wrath, is always overflowing and disturbing the outward suavity that is essential to successful irony. . . . It is very effective and very vigorous, but spoilt in places by an excess of rage . . . The personal indignation of the author is, as nearly always with Milton, far too apparent. (22-23)

Turner feels that only in *Areopagitica* are Milton's powers of irony fully displayed, for only here are the subjects significant and dignified enough to support the grandeur of his prose. Usually, Milton is so grave and logical that his irony "has the double effect of being both ludicrous and very sensible" (24). Turner concludes his article on "Milton and the Dawn of the Age of Irony" by observing that Milton was a gigantic figure in an age of feeble and irritable ironists. Milton alone is worth our consideration.

> His worst irony can compete with any of his contemporaries' maledictions. . . . His best irony, on the other hand, stands by itself in attaining to a dignity, and almost to a grandeur, very rarely associated with ironical utterance, and as an appeal to commonsense and a wide and sane toleration it has not been surpassed. (25-26)

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LEARNING THROUGH LANGUAGE
A Call for Action in All Disciplines

Prepared by Language and Learning
Across the Curriculum Committee

National Council of Teachers of English

Endorsed by the International Reading Association

LANGUAGE AND LEARNING

Classrooms where language is used for learning are fundamentally different from classrooms you may be familiar with. For many years, teachers and researchers have known that students learn better and that their learning lasts longer in language-intensive classrooms.

> *No matter what the subject, the people who read it, write it, and talk it are the ones who learn it best.*

To give students a better learning environment, dramatic changes are needed in how language is used to learn and in what classrooms look and sound like.

WHAT LANGUAGE-INTENSIVE CLASSROOMS LOOK LIKE

Students learning new concepts and processes try to teach them to others, write a letter or journal entry explaining them, or make a list of what they do and do not understand.

Students work together on a unit of study, talk with their peers, listen for areas of agreement and mutual understanding, negotiate joint goals and plans, read resource materials, prepare written notes for personal use and for sharing with others, jointly draft a group paper, and prepare oral presentations to share their learning with their class or other audiences.

Students sit in circles or other clusters, sometimes with their teacher as one member of the group. The students set questions to guide future discussion and study questions for investigation are as likely to be asked by the students as by the teacher.

Students play an active role in choosing topics for study. Students may be reading different materials and pursuing their own questions and topics. They will also decide how to share what they are learning with their peers. Students maintain learning logs, ongoing journals in which whey record frequent observations about their learning. In secondary schools, these observations may focus on learning of a particular subject area. Periodically, students use these logs to look back at their learning over time, to discover what helped and hindered, and to develop more effective learning strategies and goals for the future.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE

- **Teachers need to reassess their teaching and reexamine their students' learning.** If students are not working and learning, investigate and try out ways to structure more active, language-centered teaching and learning.
- **Teachers can examine language uses in their classrooms.** Who is talking? Who is asking the questions? How many modes of language (talking, listening, writing, reading) are students actively using? What activities and assignments can be introduced to increase the range and extent of student language?
- **Teachers can restructure their teaching and their classrooms,** sharing some of the control over the course of study with students, and can learn alongside their students.
- **Teachers should ground their thinking and teaching** in current language research and theory.
- **Administrators need to support innovative teachers** through professional development opportunities and evaluation criteria which recognize and celebrate innovation.
- **Parents should expect to see different classrooms** from those they remember. They will see classrooms where talk prevails, students often work in groups, and students actively participate in many projects.
- **Parents can evaluate an assignment** for the degree to which it genuinely engages interest, guides students through the learning process, incorporates

feedback from teachers and peers, and requires many different ways of using language.

- **Students can join in exploring new ways of learning with their teachers** and share their enthusiasm for active exploration, talking, writing, and reading with others in their school community.

CALL FOR ACTION

American education is at a critical crossroad. Pressure for accountability and reform is intense. Rather than responding by trying to recreate classrooms of the past or by simply intensifying current practices, teachers, administrators, students, parents, and politicians must remain focused on what we have discovered about learning in the best classrooms.

> *We reiterate, classrooms where language is used for learning are fundamentally different classrooms. They are places where students talk, read, and write frequently, places where they learn better and their learning lasts longer.*

To improve schools for all learners, we need to have a different destination in mind and we need to walk a different path. How students learn cannot be separated from what they learn.

Students are most likely to become engaged, independent, critical thinkers when their learning is viewed as an opportunity for significant investigation, individual application, and personal reflection. Now is the time for action.

National Council of Teachers of English
1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096

"Young Authors" in Shelby County

Bonnie E. Siler
Samford University

> We Winnt To The
> Circus. It is fun There.
> We saw Buffalos
> Jumping Through Fire.
> The Monkes Did Tricks.
> The Ellufints Sat on
> Stools. The Monckys
> Rode Scooters. Thaa
> Sold Toys There. The
> School Bus Brung us
> Home. The End.

Some readers might be appalled at the number of spelling and grammatical errors in this story—unless they knew the writer was only in kindergarten. At a time when many students are just learning how to form letters, the writer of this story, Brett Christian John McInnis, has already begun to write his own stories. Because of his work, he was invited to participate in the 1993 Young Authors Conference hosted by the Shelby County Schools.

Brian and Erin Pemberton, of Oak Mountain Elementary School, also participated in the Shelby County Young Authors Conference.

Throughout the school year Brian, a second grade student, and Erin, a fifth grade student, have worked on stories, poems, plays, and illustrations during their classes. Often their teachers, Ms. Bullock and Mr. Stronge, would give Brian and Erin a specific time for writing in the class. At other times the students used their own free time to write, whether at home or at school.

The conference, co-sponsored by the University of Montevallo and the Shelby County Board of Education, is actually the final stage of year-long efforts by the students. After students like Brian and Erin are selected to attend the Young Authors Conference they all congregate on one Saturday in the spring at the University of Montevallo. While at the conference Erin and Brian, along with other students, shared their written work and met with famous authors and illustrators.

At the 1994 Conference Erin and Brian were two of over 1000 students in kindergarten through eighth grade. The famous authors and illustrators who attended were: Ann Dorer, *Mother Makes a Difference*; Elaine Moore, *Sarah With An H*; Jerry Mallet, *The Mystery at the Laff-a-Lott Amusement Park*; Charles Ghigna, *Good Dogs: Bad Dogs*; Melanie Hope Greenberg, *At the Beach*; Faye Gibbons, *King Shoes and*

Clown Pockets; Jerome McDonough, *B.A.T.S.;* Kate Salley Palmer, *Gracious Plenty;* and Mark Cullum, an editorial cartoonist with *The Birmingham News.* These writers spent time with the children giving them helpful hints for developing their writing skills.

The Shelby County Young Authors Conference began with the hard work and dedication of several individuals. The idea for the conference surfaced in 1987 when Jerry Bullock, then a fourth grade teacher at Valley Elementary, attended a similar conference at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. He loved the idea and thought that it was essential to have a conference for Shelby County students. After speaking with the president of the Alabama Reading Association and the superintendent of the Shelby County School System, the conference became a reality. The idea of having a college involved was beneficial because the college would have the facilities to hold the conference, could provide security, parking, etc., so they used the University of Montevallo because of its location in Shelby County.

The original coordinators of that first year were Dr. Judy White—Shelby County Board of Education, Dr. Elaine Hughes—University of Montevallo, and Evelyn Blake—Principal of Valley Elementary School. "Those involved with the UAB conference were extremely helpful. Our program was modeled after theirs and had it not been for their assistance the Shelby County conference wouldn't have gotten off to such a great start," Elaine Hughes said. "That first year in 1987 was questionable. We didn't know if we could pull it off," Evelyn Blake said. "We had the support of the schools and the teachers, and parents became very involved. That is what made it a success."

What a success it has been! In 1994, Brian Pemberton went back for his third straight year and Erin attended her fourth conference. They will have the opportunity to attend many more conferences throughout elementary, middle school, and high school, thanks to funding from Alabama Power Company in 1993. With the funding provided by Alabama Power, "The Write Connection" branched off from the Young Authors Conference. This is a conference similar to the Young Authors Conference, only it is for high school students in Shelby County. In 1994, 65 high school students were invited to meet with outstanding people in the areas of poetry, drama, fiction, and illustrations. Guests included: poet, Charles Ghigna; playwright, Jerome McDonough; illustrator, Kate Salley Palmer, and novelist, Joyce Carol Thomas.

Erin and Brian Pemberton hope that they will be invited to attend conferences in the future. "I love going to the Young Authors Conference because I like trying to get my stories published. I also like meeting authors and hearing about their styles of writing. It gives me more ideas," Erin said. With opportunities like "The Write Connection" Erin and Brian just might be able to develop their writing skills by attending these conferences throughout elementary, middle, and high school.

These conferences encourage the children to write in the classroom as well as at home. "At school we usually spend one hour after lunch working on our writing, but we can also write stories when we have already gotten our work done. I like to write when I'm at home, too," Brian said. "When I am trying to come up with an idea I usually write lots of words down on a sheet of paper. I list characters, ideas, things, problems, all types of things. Then I choose the idea that I like the best and try to make a story about it. My favorite story that I have written was called *Things That Move*. It was about escalators, jets, and airplanes," Brian said.

"I like to write about things that I have always wanted to do but never had the courage," Erin said. "I was in second grade when I wrote my favorite story. It was called *April Fool's Day Joke*. It was about two girls who dressed up as boys. They played tricks on all their friends and even their parents. No one ever found out. That is something that I have always thought would be funny," Erin said.

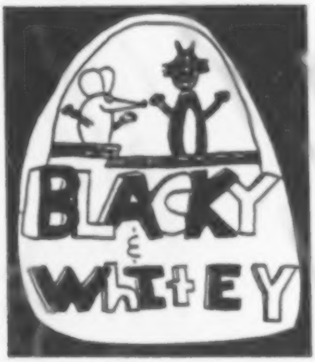
Fostering the kind of enthusiasm that Erin and Brian have about writing is exactly what The Young Authors Conference and "The Write Connection" hope to do. Currently they are achieving their goal by continuing to attract young, aspiring writers. These writers are being exposed to what it takes to become a published writer. Through this conference they are given the opportunity to interact one-on-one with the authors. This continually promotes the purpose of the Young Authors Conference:

> To encourage children to develop their reading and writing skills, to foster in them a greater appreciation for literature and for the writing process, to build their confidence in their abilities, and to support development of their potential.

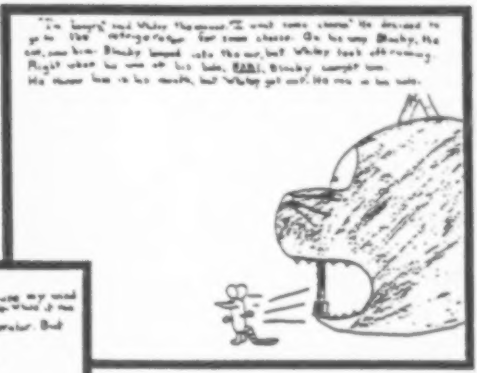
If this standard continues as it has for the past seven years, then young authors like Brett Christian John McInnis, and Erin and Brian Pemberton just might be on the best-seller list someday.

• •

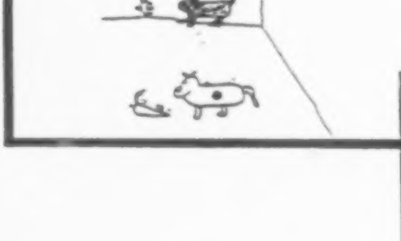
The following pages contain pictures and stories written by young authors from Shelby County. They were originally published in a collection called "In the Spotlight," which was funded by the Alabama Power Company. Our thanks to Dr. Elaine W. Hughes,the University of Montevallo, and the Shelby County Board of Education for their permission to reprint these works.



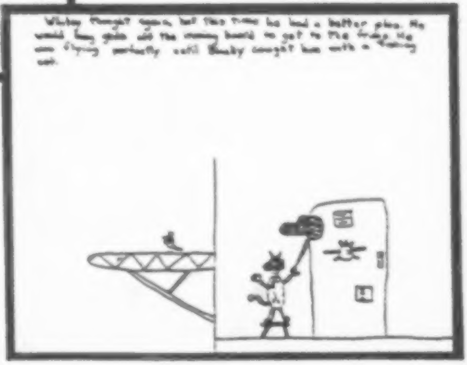
This book is dedicated to
my cat Claie.



"I'm hungry," said Whitey the mouse. "I want some cheese." He decided to go to the refrigerator for some cheese. On his way Blacky, the cat, saw him. Blacky leaped into the air, but Whitey took off running. Right when he was at his hole, BAM!, Blacky caught him. He threw him in his mouth, but Whitey got out. He ran in his hole.



"I need a way to get past that cat."
He thought and thought. Finally, he had a plan. "I'll use my wind up mouse." He wound up his mouse and let it go out the hole. While it ran about the room, he ran close to the walls to the refrigerator. But the cat also had a plan of his own.



Whitey thought again, but this time he had a better plan. He would hang glide off the ironing board to get to the fridge. He was flying perfectly until Blacky caught him with a fishing net.

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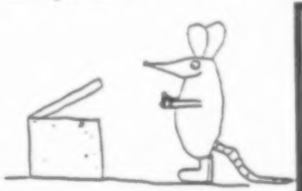
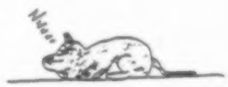
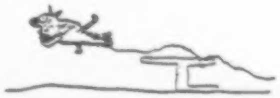
Whitey couldn't think of another way to get by Blacky. "Maybe if I get some sleep I can think of something in the morning."
The next morning Whitey felt fine. He stood upside down because that always helped him think better.
All of a sudden he shouted, "I've got it!"
He ran to an old box and opened it up. Inside was a lot of junk. He picked up a crumpled piece of paper and said, "Aha! The Super-Cat Trap my father gave me."



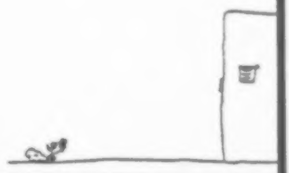
He immediately ran out of his hole. "Great timing, Blacky's asleep."
He ran back to the box and got a big piece of string. Then he ran all over the room wrapping the string around the legs of all the furniture.

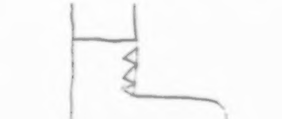


He then tied the end of the string to Blacky's tail. Whitey walked up to Blacky's face and punched him right in the nose. Blacky screamed, jumped up and took off running. All the tables and chairs came tumbling down with a BANG!



Mr. McChase ran in the room. He saw all of the furniture and the cat. He picked up the cat and threw him outside. He picked up the mess and left the room.
Whitey jumped up and ran for the refrigerator. But then...





About the Author

The author of this book is Taylor Lightfoot. He has lived in Montevallo all his life. He has a sister and a cat. He likes sports and Nintendo.

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FOUR SHORT POEMS BY JACK WATERS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jack Waters is 12 years old and is in the sixth grade at Thompson Middle School. He likes football and especially baseball. He collects baseball cards.

FATHERS AND MOTHERS

Fathers are the outline in your life
Mothers are the color
Your Father keeps you in line
Your Mother keeps you happy
Most of the time
Your Father is your buddy
But when you do wrong
You get a whippen but keep moving on
And through it all you must remember
Mothers and Fathers both alike
Love you for your whole life.

WHAT I WANTED TO SAY...

What I wanted to say...
I wanted to say so many things
But I didn't know where to start
So I said what I felt
From the bottom of my heart
It was very passionate but plain
What I said was
I Love You.

BEAUTIFUL

I see you sitting there in the rain
When I look at you on the outside you
look so plain
But when I got to know you
You weren't so plain at all
On the inside you were—
Beautiful.

CATCH ME A WIND

Catch me a wind, try if you can
Grab it, hold it, place it in my hand.

With Mr. Wind up in the air
Try and reach him if you dare.

Blowing his wind across the land
Oh, catch me a wind, try if you can

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Was It Hippolyta, Hermia or Helena?

Loretta S. Gray
Central Washington University

Shakespeare's characters change not only costumes and settings in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* but attitudes, identities, and lovers as well. Who loves Hermia? Helena? Hippolyta? And whom does Oberon love? Veteran readers may lose themselves in the changing relationships in this play; novice readers of Shakespeare often do. The latter are confronted by a complicated plot, Elizabethan English, and versification.

High school students generally fear and sometimes discredit the task of untangling a plot with linguistic snags. Teachers lose hope because they spend an inordinate amount of time reviewing the plot. I have often quelled the desire to hand out summaries written in modern English as part of homework assignments because my teacher's sense told me that given these summaries, students would not bother to read the play. As an alternative, I found a way in which my students discover and understand the plot line while reading the original version. The Cloze procedure, which is based on the Gestalt concept that individuals seek closure, has been successful in my classroom. Given a passage with key words deleted, students draw upon their knowledge of the play and their understanding of contextual clues in order to fill in the blanks.

For my tenth grade students, I wrote summaries of each scene or, if the scenes were short, of every few scenes of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Later, I erased all of the Characters' names. The following is an example from Act II, Scene i:

_____, attendant to the queen of the Fairies, _____, meets _____, more commonly known as _____, in a forest near Athens. _____, is the henchman for _____, King of the Fairies. _____, tells _____ that _____ wants the Indian child who is with _____'s train.

A moment later, _____ enters with his followers and _____, with hers. They chide each other for showing love for _____ and _____, respectively. _____ denies _____'s request for the child and leaves the scene.

In his anger, _____ calls to _____ and orders him to fetch the flower, Love in-idleness. The juice of this flower when applied to sleeping eyes will make a person adore the first creature seen upon waking. _____ wants to get revenge on _____ for denying his request.

While _____ is away completing his task, _____ overhears a conversation between _____ and _____, in which _____ is trying to endear herself to _____ while _____ continues to refuse her advances. _____ takes part of it to use on the eyes of _____ and gives the other part to _____, directing him to put the juice on the eyes of a man in Athenian garments.

I give students this cloze exercise and direct them to complete it after reading its corresponding scene. Students generally come to class on the following day knowing exactly what happened or, if not, with specific blanks incomplete. These empty spaces direct me to the parts of the scene that need to be reviewed. After this short review, we continue our investigation of the play. (At this point, our discussions usually revolve around the casting of Puck.)

As an alternative procedure, small group work can be assigned as the review part of the class. Within their groups, students can help each other finish the summary by using the text to support their answers.

From a pedagogical point of view, I value the cloze procedure because it directs attention to the text and encourages student discussion in a gamesome manner. Students tell me they view the assignment as a puzzle. The greatest benefit, however, is not in the completion of the cloze exercise itself but rather in the discussions made possible because the students thoroughly understand the plot. The question is no longer "Who did this?" but "Why was it done?"

The Thank You Note

Evelyn Shaw
Tarrant Middle School

The fifth grade student was belligerent, antagonistic, and prejudiced toward her white teacher. She was tall, proud, and ready for a fight. Intelligent, but not yet ready to use that intelligence toward a worthwhile pursuit.

The teacher was young, inexperienced, trained in early childhood, not early adolescence.

The confrontation came in the form of a writing assignment. The student used the assignment as a vicious attack on the white teacher, filling it with obscenities and hate. She had expressed herself, and she had done the assignment. What was the teacher to do with the paper? After reviewing various options, the paper received a grade of "A" with one comment, "Poor use of language." No reply from the student, but a subtle change was noted in behavior. This was not the response she had anticipated from her teacher.

Christmas came with the usual exchange of gifts between teacher and student . . . even a gift from this angry student. As a child, the teacher had received a thank-you note from her second-grade teacher. This had made such an impression on the teacher that she wanted to continue this practice, so thank-you notes were mailed over the holidays. The teacher received an unexpected letter from the student.

> Dear Teacher,
>
> Thank's for the card! I told my father and mother that I didn't like you, And he said if you don't like your teacher that she wantn't like you! So I think when we go back to school I'll start all over again, if you don't maned.
>
> You is the first teacher that sent me a card that say's thank you for the gifts.
>
> And Thank's for the little pad that you gave me.
>
> I did have time to write slow because the mail man was coming up the hill.
>
> My Mother read the card and she said that the nicest card she's ever seen. I think so, to. And I'll like to be your friend if you be my's.
>
> Sincerely,
> The Student

Indeed, the student did start over. She started making good grades. She became the teacher's advocate. In the years to follow she always brought the teacher a Christmas gift. When high school graduation came, she graduated with honors and a scholarship. The teacher was invited and with tears in her eyes she knew the reward of a simple "thank you."

Promoting Critical Thinking in the Secondary English Class

Stacey Clark Clem
Troy State University

You are teaching a unit on Greek Mythology and need an introductory activity that will provide some background information about Greece, the culture, and the origination of the genre. Which assignment do you do?

A

Assignment: Research and then write a five-page paper on an aspect of Greek Culture. You will have two days in the Media Center to conduct research. For each page you are short, your grade will drop one letter.

Student response: The students file into the Media Center, grab the nearest encyclopedia, and feverishly begin copying enough information about Greece to fill up five pages.

B

Assignment: In cooperative learning groups of three, you will research an aspect of Greek culture and compare and contrast it with your own culture. While you are in the Media Center, locate as many different types of resources as you can—photographs, portions of videos, songs, poems. Each member of the group will present 1 to 2 minutes from your research (including your comparisons) to the class in a round table discussion. Once the class has discussed and debated the cultural content of Greece and our own country, each individual will write a comparison/contrast essay for a grade.

Student response: The students file into the library and embark on a search for meaning as they try to determine the relationship of Greek history and culture to their present experience.

The Alabama State Course of Study for English Language Arts calls for teachers to help students become "effective communicators" and "lifelong enjoyers and appreciators of language." To accomplish these goals we must teach our students to be critical thinkers—people who can analyze, synthesis, debate, and make connections between what they are reading and writing in class and real life experiences.

Can we teach critical thinking? Yes we can. Certainly many of us have given assignments like the one in the first scenario, but we have to ask ourselves if they really help our students *think critically*. In my experience, they do not. Instead, we must provide our students with rich, meaningful opportunities to work with one another, share and discuss ideas, report back to the class, and write about the connections they unearth.

Giving students the opportunity to take some of the responsibility for their own learning is a first step, but often a difficult one for us to take. We fear that we might lose control or that the students cannot handle the "academic freedom" or the challenge. However, when we tap their interest and our role becomes one of facilitator, guide, or coach, I have found that students become actively involved in the learning experience. As we facilitate activities that engage students in the critical thinking process, they begin to create, predict, compare, solve—not just memorize and copy. They become thinkers.

If our students are going to become "effective communicators" and lifelong enjoyers and appreciators of language," the development of critical thinking skills needs to be a top priority in our classrooms.

Teaching Ethics in the English Classroom

Rachel S. Meadows
Troy State University

As a future teacher of English I constantly question the techniques and strategies I will employ in my teaching. One of these questions concerns the teaching of ethics.

I know the importance of teaching facts; there are just certain facts that students should know when they graduate from school. But to what extent should I teach morals?

Obviously, a lot of students are not learning morals and values as evidenced in teen crime rates, suicides, etc. And today, more than ever, students are bombarded with very diverse opinions of what is right and wrong. Family, friends, and media are all important influences on a student, but these sources may have differing opinions on the same subject. So how does a student know whom to believe?

I feel that it is important to teach students to be independent thinkers. Students ultimately have to decide for themselves their own codes of ethics. However, I feel that as an English teacher I can provide my students with opportunities to explore and examine certain issues that can lead them to this definition of ethics. There is some kind of lesson, moral, or value to be discovered in every literary work, and my job will be to develop assignments from or centering around these ethics to help students question, define, and defend their beliefs.

The English classroom provides the perfect atmosphere for exposure to and exploration of ethics through the everyday classroom activities of reading, writing, speaking, and listening, and I believe that this study of ethics would prove interesting and beneficial to both the teacher and the students.

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7:00-9:30	Complimentary Lawn Party - Jazz Fest

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday

7:00-8:30	Registration
8:30-10:00	General Session/Keynote Speakers
10:00-1:00	Concurrent Sessions
1:00-2:00	Complimentary Luncheon (Tuesday)
1:00-on	Grand Recreation
2:00-4:00	Workshops: D'Arcy, Nathan (Tuesday)
4:00-5:00	High Tea
7:00-9:00	Dinner Honoring James Gray (Monday)

* Arrangements for lodging (special conference rate for up to four persons) should be made directly with the Grand Hotel (1-800-544-9932) before July 7.

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- -

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BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Faye Gibbons: Alabama Author

Joan Nist
Auburn University

Faye Gibbons is one of Alabama's foremost writers for young people, author of *Some Glad Morning* (Morrow, 1982), *Mighty Close to Heaven* (Morrow, 1985), and *King Shoes and Clown Pockets* (Morrow, 1989). Her forthcoming books, Night in the Barn (illustrated by Eric Ingraham) and Mountain Wedding (illustrated by Ted Rand) will be her first works in picture book format. Other books are in both composition and idea stage.

Gibbons was born and grew up in the north Georgia mountains, a locale which helped shape her writing and which she, in turn, makes a vivid setting for several of her books. A shy youngster, she read a great deal. Since her parents moved frequently, seeking work from one mill town to another, she did not go to school regularly until she was almost nine. School records failed to catch up with their moves, so Gibbons promoted herself up through the early grades.

Encouraged by a high school teacher who recognized her talent, she was the first of her family to go to college. In her new surroundings—like many young people who leave home—she wanted to shed family traditions. But when she returned a decade later for her grandmother's funeral, she realized how beautiful her grandmother had been. Earlier, she had never noticed because her grandmother always wore a coarse, shapeless dress and pulled her hair back simply. As Gibbons looked around at her siblings and cousins, all high school or college-educated, well off materially, she saw the loss of the old world in which her grandparents had lived.

This experience impelled her to write about that world as she had known it, to give her children and others a sense of that life and to pay her respects to her grandparents. Despite the fact that neither they nor her parents had had opportunity for much formal schooling, her family belonged to a rich storytelling culture. Front-porch stories were told while folks shelled peas or snapped beans. No story was allowed to die, but kept circulating, maybe colored a bit, but alive with human humor, love, sadness, and resilience.

For instance, there was the story about the time when her dad's mother—her grandmother—was called out to nurse a neighbor. Her grandpa chose the occasion as a good time to teach their kids, left in his care, how to read. The walls of the house were wall-papered with newspapers. Grandpa lined the children up along the papered walls and taught them to read that afternoon. As an added incentive to learn, if they missed, they got hit.

True to her inspiration, Gibbons' books focus on family relationships and reflect their Southern setting. The universality of her themes, however, and the protagonists' growth through struggle give the stories appeal to readers of any region. In fact, *Mighty Close to Heaven* appeared on the award list of a far-west state because the hero Dave's quest—physically through north Georgia wooded mountains and emotionally for a home with family whose love he can perceive—easily translates to other places and other young people.

Some Glad Morning, her first book, has a female hero, Maude, who lives amidst an extended family of half-relatives, step-relatives, and other relationships fractured by death or separation. Gibbons indicates the solace given these people by their church religion: *Some Glad Morning* is the gospel song sung by a simple-minded step-aunt of Maude's. It is through seeing the singer's innocent happiness that Maude begins to sense the good qualities of her country kin beneath what she earlier observed only as bad grammar and poor manners.

Gibbons has long kept journals filled with observations: such descriptions keep scenes fresh when she begins to structure a story. She is also alert to suggestions and memories of family members. Her third novel was given its intriguing title by one of her sons: *King Shoes and Clown Pockets*, symbolic names for the two young heroes, Raymond and Bruce. The climb which climaxes their friendship came from one of Gibbons' brothers, "who held me spellbound and Dizzy with his account of being 'frozen' on a quarry wall" ("Acknowledgment"). This work, set in Alabama, features a protagonist-grandparent relationship, like the earlier stories.

In *Mighty Close to Heaven*, Gibbons introduces one of her finest characters: Bessie, a wildcrafter-herbalist, a woman who doctors the isolated mountain poor and who also tends to Dave's wounded spirit. Bessie is tribute paid by the author to a real Bessie, friend of Gibbons' grandmother. The book is dedicated in part to this Bessie Craig, "a lady who has lived, learned, and loved for ninety-six year." Gibbons later wrote in a eulogy that Bessie was "a country woman, a practical woman who had made her own way in a time when few women did" (*Citizen-News* [Dalton, Ga] 2 Sept. 1986: 12). In a parallel to the portrait in words which Gibbons made of her, Bessie in one scene stitches stars for a quilt, and readers see another form of memory heritage: each star is cut from clothing of people in Bessie's life, and "When I git this quilt finished, it'll be nearly good as a book about my family and friends" (123).

Gibbons now lives in Deatsville, Alabama, in a large gracious homestead of her husband's family.

There she is polishing her completed picture book text of *Mountain Wedding*. Like her other works, this is fiction inspired by memories of her grandparents. It depicts the union, not just of two people, but of two extended families and includes all the vitality, humor, solemnity, and hope of the occasion. She has begun a draft of *Going to Montgomery*, a story focused on the region of her present home, this time using reminiscences of her husband's family.

Like other writers, Gibbons is busy in a variety of activities related to children's literature. She has published in *Highlights*, the well-known magazine, and has been on the faculty of the summer Highlights Foundation Writers Workshop at Chautauqua, New York. She has been a featured speaker in schools and at professional meetings, such as those of the International Reading Association, The University of Georgia Annual Children's Literature Conference, and the Alabama-Georgia Chapter of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators. She guards time for her writing amid this other work. Her husband has always been very supportive, and, as she says, "my first and best editor" ("Truth in Fiction," *The Montgomery Advertiser* and *Alabama Journal*, 19 Nov. 1989: 2F). Critics have been positive in their appraisals:

> *Some Glad Morning*: "Gibbons's depiction of time and place is vivid and her characters are drawn with a knowing hand." (*Booklist*)
>
> *King Shoes and Clown Pockets*: "Gibbons excels at vividly describing the rural Southern setting, and at drawing characters who come alive through the cadence of their speech and their interactions with others." (*School Library Journal*)

There can be no better way to conclude this introduction to Faye Gibbons, Alabama author, than to give a tempting taste from the forthcoming *Mountain Wedding*:

The preacher cleared his throat and opened his Bible, "We are gathered together..." he began in his church voice. "Wait," said Mama, grabbing at my baby brother, who had just thrown himself on top of Mr. Long's next-to-the-youngest boy. The two of them tumbled over and over in the dirt and under the porch, where they knocked into a large yellow tom cat. The cat hissed and a hound dog on the porch growled in reply. A cluster of chickens in the yard clucked in alarm. . . .

And after a cascade of minor calamities:

"Are we ready for the wedding?" he [the preacher] panted.

"Yes," said all us young'uns.

"Yes," said Mama, "We are finally gathered together."

National Standards Project:

Questions and Answers
From the National Council of Teachers of English

1. **What groups are involved in the Standards Project for English Language Arts?**

    The project is a joint effort of the National Council of Teachers of English, the International Reading Association (IRA), and the Center for the Study of Reading (CSR) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

    The National Board for Standards in English Language Arts, a public board, retains policy responsibility for the project. The Board reviews and gives final approval to the work of the three Project Task Forces.

    NCTE, IRA, and CSR provide management and leadership for the Project. Both NCTE and IRA are setting up networks for discussing standards issues and for reviewing draft documents.

2. **What will the standards look like?**

    While it is too early in the process to describe exactly what the standards will look like, we can say what they will not look like. The standards will not be a set of objectives or a "laundry list" of skills that students must master by a certain age or grade.

    Whatever form a standard may take, it will be embedded in a context of classroom and learner characteristics, with vignettes and examples to show the many ways that it might be implemented. The Board envisions the language of the standards documents as "teacher-friendly." At the same time, it hopes to explore the use of metaphor and narrative as powerful forms of expression. The standards will be informed by work that has already been done in the field, such as The English Coalition Conference: Democracy through Language and Essentials of English.

3. How will the work of the Project progress?

Three Project Task Forces (Early School, pre-K through grade 4; Middle School, grades 5-8; and high school, grades 9-12) are responsible for writing Project documents. Review of these documents by NCTE and IRA affiliates, individuals, local focus groups, and other organizations will occur throughout the course of the Project. These review groups are expected to provide ideas and vignettes to the Task Forces.

The National Board of Standards in English Language Arts will give final approval to all Project documents. In addition, the NCTE Executive Committee and the IRA Board of Directors each has independent authority to accept or reject Project documents.

4. How can classroom teachers and parents get involved?

Teachers can become members of NCTE, which will provide continuous information about the Project's activities and a forum for discussion of and input to the standards. Teachers and parents can form committees or task forces in their communities, districts, or regions to review documents. They can supply vignettes showing good classroom practice and suggest topics that need to be addressed. If the specific idea of a group is used in the final standards document, that group will be recognized in the document as a contributor.

5. What will be the impact of the standards in the classroom?

In schools that choose to use them, national standards will inform curriculum and practice, affecting teachers, learners, and their educational communities. In the classroom, standards will remind teachers of where they're going just as a pattern or road map does. Standards will help teachers to think about the language arts holistically, even as they plan very specific lessons in the midst of units. Standards will link teachers while bonding them to local peers with whom they will continue to work to set standards.

6. Will the standards lead to a national curriculum and a national test?

The standards will be voluntary, not mandatory, and are not intended to be used as a national curriculum or lead to a national test. NCTE will resist any attempts to manipulate these standards, intended as a guide for local articulation, into a nationally mandated curriculum. A national curriculum exists already, determined by the professions by textbook publishers and standardized tests.

The Standards Project for English Language Arts seeks to use the knowledge of classroom teachers, parents, students, and scholars to describe what students should know and be able to do. Finally, the standards will be dynamic, not static; they will constantly change to fit local needs. They are not intended as law but as example.

Write to NCTE Headquarters for more information.

The Standards Project for English Language Arts, a brochure explaining the collaborative effort of NCTE, IRA, and CSR, is available from NCTE. Details of the project, who will participate, and how interested persons can get involved are included. To obtain a copy of the brochure send a stamped, self-addressed envelope with your request to Carolyn Hill, NCTE 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096.

Understanding ESL Writers: A Guide for Teachers

By Ilona Leki. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton Cook/Heinemann, 1992. 151pp.

Reviewed by
David R. Dedo
Samford University, Birmingham, Alabama

Because of its comprehensiveness, Ilona Leki's text is the type that often appears as required reading in graduate programs in ESL or TESL. It provides a thorough theoretical and practical background for anyone preparing to teach writing to non-native speakers of English. Based on my own experiences with ESL writing (and something that should ease the anxieties of teachers new to this situation), I firmly agree with Leki's claim that:

> Teaching writing to ESL students is not radically different from teaching writing to native English speakers. Many of the same attitudes, techniques, and even syllabuses work well with ESL students. Teachers who find ESL students in their classes for the first time and who are worried about meeting these students' special needs already know a great deal about the best way to help them improve their writing. (xi)

Section I of this text, with its two chapters on the "History of Writing Instruction in English as a Second Language," and "Models of L2 [second language] Acquisition," provides those new to the field with a brief yet informative overview of how writing has been taught in the ESL context and what models of second language learning have been developed by researchers in the field. The purpose of section II (three chapters) is to provide readers with a profile of the ESL student. Chapter three compares ESL writers to "basic writers," those native speakers classified as less skilled in writing. Chapter four, "Characteristics of ESL Students: Varieties, Expectations, Experiences," outlines the characteristics of these students as newcomers to our culture. And chapter five is a discussion of differences among these learners and how they can influence the behaviors ESL students typically exhibit in the classroom.

Section III of the text focuses on creating a more specific profile of the ESL student as ESL writer. (It is important to remember, while the title of this section is "Components of ESL Writing," the title of the whole work is Understanding ESL Wri*ters*, not Understanding ESL Writing.) Chapter Six provides a discussion of "Writing Behaviors" (for example, "Naiveness" and "Problems with Plagiarism"), while Chapter Seven attempts to outline features of the act of composing in ESL itself ("L2 Composing: Strategies and Perceptions). One of the most important claims in this chapter is that "when non-native writers write in English, they are able to rely on strategies that they employ in their L1 [native language] writing" (77). However, the ESL teacher seldom, if ever, knows much about the L1 writing profiles of his or her students. This is one of the most significant research "gaps" in the discipline.

The final three chapters focus more specifically on features of the texts that ESL students produce. Chapter eight, "Contrastive Rhetoric," demonstrates for the reader some problems that ESL students may have, and exhibit in their texts, because the rhetorical conventions they have learned in their native cultures are not appropriate when writing for readers with our cultural/rhetorical expectations. Chapter nine, "Sentence-Level Errors," proposes that teachers assume a developmental perspective on errors of sentence-level conventions. The errors are (often) not "mistakes," but rather a "window" on the "interlanguage" that a particular student possesses. In other words, they can mark a student's progress or development toward greater proficiency in written English. Finally, chapter 10, "Responding to ESL Writing," offers the ESL writing instructor sound advice on the most productive way to respond to the texts produced by his or her students. And it's a comfort to see that much advice that I have taken as a writing teacher for native speakers applies to ESL students as well; for example, the notion that feedback provided on final (i.e., graded) drafts is seldom well received (if at all) by the student. In correcting grammar, Leki suggests that instructors should first focus their attention on errors that seriously disrupt comprehension, and only later deal with other types of errors.

In conclusion, *Understanding ESL Writers,* is a wonderful "first book" for those about to engage in the teaching of writing for ESL students. In fact, Leki appears to have had an audience of non-experts in mind as she composed this work, because the style is clear and direct, and jargon is kept to a minimum. And certainly this work should also be on the bookshelves of experienced teachers as well, for it can serve as an important reference work. (The book contains an excellent bibliography.) For those engaged in this important area of our work, I suggest this work deserves an enthusiastic "thumbs up."

Peer Response Groups in Action: Writing Together in Secondary Schools

By Karen Spear et al. Portsmouth, NH:
Boynton Cook/Heinemann, 1993. 264 pp.

Reviewed by
Carol Dean
Samford University, Birmingham, Alabama

In *Peer Response Groups in Action* Karen Spear explores the collaborative process in secondary English classes. She reports on the efforts of nine classroom teachers who daily test the boundaries of instruction as they experiment with their teaching and their students by teaching writing as a collaborative process. Equally important is these teachers' goal of genuine meaning for writing.

Spear's opening chapter examines the focus on collaborative writing in light of the most prevalent model of teaching, Paulo Freire's "banking model," which stresses that knowledge is something to be deposited, stored, and withdrawn on demand. This model makes learning impersonal and isolates teachers from students, students from students and teachers from teachers. She also states that isolationism is encouraged by the school culture of "competitive individualism," in which students compete for the teacher's attention, scholarships, test scores, memberships on teams, in clubs, etc.

Spear believes that experiencing only the model of "separate knowing" denies students the other equally valuable experience of "connected knowing," the sharing of ideas and social exploration. She shares the stories of teachers who believe that collaboration and connected knowing are appropriate ways to teach writing. The teachers share about what has worked and what has not. Both will be helpful to the reader.

In chapter two Heather Brunjes explores a project in which she collaborated with a high school teacher to improve the effectiveness of student response groups. Brunjes, who had used response groups very successfully in junior high, was asked by Kathryn, a friend and colleague, to collaborate and guide her high school class's process. After a year of research, interesting learning took place for students and teachers. Most importantly, the effectiveness of the response groups did improve and was affirmed in the minds of both teachers and all students. However, during the process both teachers experienced some unexpected outcomes. Kathryn realized that her expectations had probably been too high and regained confidence in herself. Brunjes saw logistical problems with high school schedule and curriculum demands that kept the process from developing as smoothly as it had in junior high. Both recognized that inherent expectations of the adolescents, of themselves, their peers, and the role of the teacher, altered the dynamics of response groups and the democratic balance between researcher, teacher, and student.

In chapter three Spear compares the writing process to a road trip. She expands the metaphor by describing several events: Figuring Out the Destination, Packing, Checking the Map, Roadside Picnics and Other Unscheduled Stops, Getting Gas, The Last Miles, and Unloading. She then takes us on a journey as we follow the development of a collaborative effort about nuclear weapons.

Part II, chapters four and five, is titled "Response Groups in Junior High." In these two chapters Becky Reimer and Marjorie Coombs discuss making response groups work with seventh and eighth graders. Reimer describes strategies she uses from the beginning of the year to encourage trust and group problem-solving. She begins with literature-based group projects, with student self-assessment as a continuous part of the process. She moves through other real situations including letters to Navajo students, whom they are planning to visit and about whom they know very little. She approaches response groups as a process to be developed throughout the year. From the very beginning students assess the effectiveness of their groups and work on ways to make them more helpful to the writer.

In chapter five Coombs discusses ways she has turned a computer lab into an interactive writing classroom. Computers are arranged in groups of four on square tables, an arrangement that encourages peer response. She used structured modeling to teach students to be effective responders. She found the students eager to experiment with the computer capabilities and with their own writing.

Part III is titled Decentering the Classroom. In this section authors Kristi Kraemer, Rebecca Laney, Cheryl Ause, and Beth Johnson explore ways to turn off teacher control and to return control of learning to the students. They emphasize such basic ideas as trusting the students and encouraging them to trust themselves and each other. They also suggest specific strategies, such as Readaround, Round-Robins, and a Writer's Response Sheet.

In chapter 10, Nolyn Starbuck Hardy takes a "look again" at the research paper. After reading a student's facetious description of a research paper, Hardy began to realize what a meaningless exercise writing term papers is to students and teachers. She resolved to take a different approach. Using Ken Macrorie's *The I-Search Paper*, Hardy encouraged the students to choose a topic of unique interest to them. Students used an adaptation of a basic university research paper format for structure and the writing process for revision. As with other real writing, publishing was in the form of a group magazine.

Part IV explores the use of writing response groups in college writing classes. In chapter 11 Strong describes a teacher-student collaborative process in which he and Trudy Griffin worked together to help Trudy move beyond her "faked" writing, learned through years of writing for the teacher. She writes her best piece analyzing her past tendency to "take the easy way out" and her present determination to take control of her learning and trust herself, her peers, and her teacher.

In the final chapter Karen Spear reiterates the importance of peer response groups, this time in the college classroom. She tells of growth in college classes because of reliance on help from peers. She brings the value of response groups full circle.

Although reluctant to begin reading this—too much to do, not enough time—I knew that I had promised. So I sat down on a Saturday morning, cup of coffee by my side. The surprise was that my coffee got cold as I was caught up in these stories of real teachers. As former classroom teacher and now a teacher of teachers, I found the stories very engaging and very timely. I felt my own frustrations validated by some of the struggles that these authors experienced. I found myself saying, "I need to share this chapter with my students."

This is a very honest look at response groups in junior and senior high school classrooms, with cautions about expectations as well as very good ideas about how to make collaboration work for the benefit of the students. I believe secondary teachers who successfully use response groups, those who would like to try but have been reluctant, and those who have tried them and have been dissatisfied with the results would enjoy this book and would benefit from the experiences of these authors.

Weaving in the Women: Transforming the High School English Curriculum

By Liz Whaley and Liz Dodge. Portsmouth, NH:
Boynton Cook/Heinemann, 1993. 300 pp.

Reviewed by
Sherron A. Hannah
Mountain Brook High School, Birmingham, Alabama

Whether one agrees or disagrees with the feminist political agenda, it is undeniable that basic high school literature curricula are male dominated and driven. Although Liz Whaley and Liz Dodge in *Weaving in the Women* present themselves as feminists under their belief that "social, economic, and cultural barriers exist for women," the authors advocate a long-lacking addition of acclaimed but previously ignored female writers to the non-gender-balanced curricula (2). Addressing the heterogeneous nature of each classroom and approaching each grade level (9, 10, 11, and 12), Whaley and Dodge have created a user-friendly tool for teacher incorporation of literature written by and about women in an outlined student-centered classroom.

Chapter two, "Modifying Pedagogy," is concerned with the "sharpening of each individual student's vision," using reader-response approaches to the alternative literature (19). It is clear that Whaley and Dodge pronounce a pedagogy of multi-faceted reality, "unattainable objectivity," and the validity of multiple perceptions; and in this revelation, the reader is first challenged to alter the close-minded, pre-determined teaching process and transform it into a collaborative, validating one (31). Clearly, this chapter is a philosophical challenge to instructors and serves as a basis for the methods used and suggested in the directed curriculum portion of the text.

Displaying a first-hand awareness of the motivational deficiencies that exist in a pronounced number of ninth and tenth graders, the section written to teachers of these grades, chapter three, offers practical techniques and selection for energized classroom assignments and discussion. Despite Whaley and Dodge's admitted deficiencies in working with tenth graders as a group, the authors make accurate assumptions about psychological factors and motivators. One interesting exercise involves the reading of a summary of Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, from climax to conclusion, and requests male students to respond to Nora's basis for leaving while females respond to Torvald's perspective. This exercise then spawns "small-group" and "whole-class" discussion (47). As a tenth grade teacher of Ibsen's play, I found this suggestion was slightly insulting; my thoughts questioned the intelligence of an instructor of this play who would not do such a role-playing exercise or thorough discussion of the obvious gender issues of the play. However, for those who have not considered such a play for this age group and who need such ideas to spark their interest in using it, the Nora versus Torvald exercise should prove successful. Other suggested works for these grade levels include Phillip Wylie's *The Disappearance*, about the disappearance of all women in the world and the aftermath; Alice Munro's short story, "Boys and Girls," concerning the reluctance of a boy and girl to fill their traditional roles; and various other poems, short stories, and novels which adequately reflect the level of ability of ninth and tenth graders. Such a list and discussion of suggested works could be invaluable to a busy teacher with little time for research but with concern for gender-balanced study.

Other sections of the book include, labeled by century, direct and specific suggestions for teachers of both American and English literature. Because their teaching experience includes student seminars on specific areas of each with classrooms containing a mix of tenth, eleventh, and twelfth graders, the text's authors created a list of suggested works which seem to be suitable for both the slower and advanced students. Chapter five, "American Literature Nineteenth Century," for example, presents at least thirty potential works for the eleventh grade classroom that present equity issues or are written by women. The former is exemplified in various examples, including Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance*, in which male and female communal residents are considered equals, and the self-sustaining farm work becomes too overwhelming for them as intellectuals.

Following sections about specific centuries in American and English literature, the text includes a twenty-page section on "Teaching Novels" (chapter 10) and forty-five pages on creating "A Women's Literature Course" (chapter 11) at the high school level. Both are instructional and practical in nature. The former is designed as the preceding chapters, while the latter reveals a framework for creating a course. Such a course might be seen at its surface to be another minority appeasement; and unfortunately, the authors untimely inclusion of several recent scandals including Anita Hill, the William Kennedy Smith rape trial, and the recently upheld Roe versus Wade decision that still limit women's choices according to individual state laws appeared to be suggested arguments for implementation of such a course. To me, these were unimpressive examples and arguments for a women's literature course and were, at the very least, politically and philosophically biased (216). I was offended as a woman that such bias would be thought necessary to persuade a school official to offer such a course, and I feel that the *accomplishments* of women in our past and present should offer proof for an elective course. Despite this opening, the chapter adeptly outlines the projects, activities, and lessons the authors have included in such a course. The outline reveals not only student involvement, but teacher analysis of the success of each endeavor. This information is again invaluable to one who would undertake the teaching of such a course.

Finally, the epilogue reiterates the importance of the understanding of all types of people and does not rob students of their own perspective about literature. Whaley and Dodge claim that "what is gained from weaving in the women is the empowerment of students, female and male, the quiet as well as the louder speaking ones" (259). This is a power which often comes with knowledge, and this text is certainly challenging to the uninformed about women's equality, writing, and place in history. The most useful aspect of this instructor's manual is the listing and suggested applications of specific works by and about women. In this sense, *Weaving in the Women* expertly completes its tapestry.

From the Other Side of the Desk: Students Speak Out About Writing

By Linda Miller Cleary. Portsmouth, NH:
Boynton Cook/Heinemann, 1991. 213 pp.

Reviewed by
Suzanne J. Hobbs
Anniston High School (Retired)

Do we, as secondary teachers of writing who value reverently the written word, cause our students to dislike writing? In our desire to provide constructive criticism of mechanics, do we impede their focus on meaningful content? Why does the exuberant enthusiasm of the elementary years turn to paralyzing apathy and active resentment for many students in high school?

In *From the Other Side of the Desk,* Linda Miller Cleary explores these provocative questions through interviewing a diverse population of students about their writing experiences. The eleventh graders (some of whom would not have been the author's favorites) come from basic, standard, and advanced English classes. They come from writing programs in urban and rural schools across the country. They have been chosen carefully to ensure a variety of socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds. Some have had more support from parents and teachers than others. Some are successful writers, and some have known little success. Although Cleary realizes that forty students may be too small a sample to be truly representative, these typical students have provided valuable insight into her central question: "What goes wrong for developing writers?"

Dr. Cleary, who taught for thirteen years at the secondary level, tells of the groans she heard early in her career from her eleventh grade students when she announced a writing assignment. As a result, she determined to seek student support for writing as a collaborative effort. Sometimes stubborn resistance from students impedes the process. Indeed, the author acknowledges that teachers cannot accept responsibility for the personal problems and peer pressure that alienate students from academic pursuits. Too often, unfortunately, the teacher represents an "accumulated version of all the past teachers and an extension of the parent.... [He or she is] the teacher who sits in the corner of the student's consciousness."

The book presents a relevant and often poignant view of the way high school students really feel as they cope with the loss of control in many aspects of their lives. Thus, the more structured the guidelines for writing, the more restricted the topics, the more frustrated the students are. Cleary has used multiple, extensive interviews and a technique called "composing aloud" to reveal the "inner voice" of her subjects and their struggle in finding that voice. She has also spent time observing the interaction between the students and their teachers causing her to remark that the "critical" teacher is much less effective in the brainstorming and drafting stages than in the revising and editing stages of composing.

In the introduction, the author details her research methods and gives a useful overview. She has divided the book into eight chapters, each of which begins with an interview excerpt in the student's words and includes pertinent comments from other students on the topic of the chapter. For example, in chapter three, under the subtopic, "When Successful Writers Struggle," Kathy (all names are pseudonyms that the students chose) reveals that "there's this faint glimmer of light in the back of my head, but I just can't draw it out with the right words." If pleasing the teacher becomes the primary focus for students, a balancing act develops "between what they wanted to say and what they believed the teacher wanted them to say." This extrinsic motivation causes students like Matt to view writing as drudgery "like scrubbing the bathroom floor."

As part of chapter seven, Cleary investigates problems associated with the "straitjacket" of the traditional writing curriculum (overemphasis on analysis of literature, format-based instruction, and grading) and makes recommendations for change. In chapter eight, "Fostering Students' Inclination to Write," the author concludes with signs of hope and a discussion of productive methods to elicit quality writing from more confident, competent students. Through the frank, vulnerable voices of her subjects, Cleary promotes sensitivity to students' needs and flexibility in approach to nurture what Emerson called "the gleam that flashes from within." The author finds, for example, that all forty students benefit from working in response groups with their peers. To enhance cooperation, she suggests using contract grading to create a less competitive environment. Students seem to have more pride and sense of ownership about writing in workshop and project-based writing curricula. However, flexibility and sensitivity in the traditional classroom also work!

Complete with an extensive bibliography, *From the Other Side of the Desk* challenges teachers to "orchestrate their curriculums to tap the energy, commitment, and strong interests of their students." Cleary also offers assistance in the form of challenging projects that students enjoy and documented support of her research findings. Informative and hard to put down, Cleary's book expresses earnestly the belief that "we need our writing curriculum to reattach students to their souls." In fact, so sincere is her proposal that teachers of writing might even imagine being blessed with "guardian angel" assistance to reduce class numbers and energy-sapping minutia. Then we would have more time to focus on student-empowering essentials: conducting conferences, creating consensus, evaluating portfolios, and nurturing all those "gleams from within."

ACTE to You

Mary Ann Tighe
President

STANDARDS PROJECT FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

The Standards Project for English Language Arts is a joint project of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), The International Reading Association (IRA), and the Center for the Study of Reading (CSR) at the University of Illinois to develop national standards for English language arts pre-K through grade 12. Phyllis Talmadge is the State Chair for the Standards Project. If you would like to participate as a reviewer or receive information on the project, contact Phyllis at Troy State University, Department of English, Smith Hall, Troy, AL 36082.

RESOLUTIONS

The following resolutions were passed at NCTE's annual convention in Pittsburg, November, 1993:
RESOLVED, that the National Council of Teachers of English encourage teachers to refrain as much as possible from using grades to evaluate and respond to student writing, using instead such techniques as narrative evaluations, written comments, dialogue journals, and conferences;
that NCTE through its commissions and committees support the use of these alternative practices by publicizing their purpose and value to the administrations of universities, colleges, and schools, and to the public; and
that NCTE establish a task force to investigate alternatives to giving students grades in writing courses, alternatives that would evaluate progress in ways sensitive to the needs of both students and individual universities, colleges, and school districts.

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Teachers of English affirm that students should read and discuss literature on genocide and intolerance within an historically accurate framework with special emphasis on primary source material; and
that NCTE create a task force to submit for publication a compilation of resources including visual media, literature, and agencies that can assist teachers in planning and producing instructional materials on the rhetoric and literature of genocide and intolerance.

CONFERENCES

Secondary Section Summer Institute, Callaway Gardens Resort, Pine Mountain, Georgia, July 12-16, 1994, "Standards and Assessment: Whose Classroom Is It?"

84th Annual Convention, Orlando, Florida, November 18-21, 1994, "Defining Ourselves and Our Work in a Changing World"

NCTE Interregional Conference, New Orleans, Louisiana, March 2-4, 1995, "English and All That Jazz"

For more information on conferences, call 800-369-NCTE.

NEWS FROM ACTE

FALL CONFERENCE

Something Magic, the ACTE Fall Conference 1993, was held in Birmingham, October 8-9 at the Wynfrey Hotel and Samford University. The conference opened Friday with "An Evening Exploring the Language Arts," a program and dinner sponsored by Holt, Rinehart and Winston. The Saturday morning program included workshops and round table discussions on a variety of topics and grade levels and a General Session featuring Dennis Covington, author of the award-winning young adult novel, Lizard. Following a luncheon participants had the option of selecting an additional workshop conducted by Linda Rief, author of Seeking Diversity. Members attending the conference were positive and enthusiastic in their comments and evaluations. The ACTE Board is now in the process of planning for next year's fall conference.

PUBLICATIONS

ACTE has two publications which are sent to all members. Alabama English, with articles written by and for English teachers, is published each spring, and Councilgrams, with local, state, and national news for English teachers, is mailed in the fall.

OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR 1994-1996

PRESIDENT, Mary Ann Tighe; VICE PRESIDENT, Lisa Williams; SECRETARY, Jeffrey Langham; TREASURER, Mike Cordle; NCTE LIAISON, Peggy Swoger; NCTE DIRECTOR, Willie Mae Crews; SLATE REPRESENTATIVE, Debra West; JOURNAL EDITOR, David Chapman: NEWSLETTER EDITOR, Leroy Sterling: PAST PRESIDENT, Ann Boozer: MEMBERSHIP, Martha Wall; SDE LIAISON, Cynthia Brown; Cynthia Brown; ARCHIVIST, Samuel Mitchell: PUBLICATIONS, Gloria Horton: EARLY CHILDHOOD, Anne Hamilton and Gary Manning; ELEMENTARY REPRESENTATIVE, Carolyn Marsh and Gwen McCorquodale; MIDDLE SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVE, Mark Barber and Irene Hunter; SECONDARY REPRESENTATIVE, Suzanne Hobbs and Kayte Melton: COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVE, Bert Hitchcock and Phyllis Talmadge.

CONFERENCE

The Gulf Coast Conference on the Teaching of Writing will be held August 7-10, 1994, at the Grand Hotel in Point Clear, Alabama. For information contact Troy State University In-Service Center, 124 McCartha Hall, Troy State University, Troy, AL 36082.

A Christianity and Literature Conference will be held June 19-24, 1994, at Kanuga in Hendersonville, NC. For information contact Ann Boozer, 1002 Forest Lane, Anniston, AL 36201.

NCTE NOTES

Meet Your Colleagues in Orlando at NCTE's Annual Convention in November

Nearly 5,000 teachers of English and language arts at all levels of education will meet in Orlando, Florida, November 18-21, to attend NCTE's Annual Convention. This year's event will provide an opportunity for English language arts teachers to focus their attention on the primacy of language arts and literacy in world events and to assess the impact of these events on the process of education.

"Defining Ourselves and Our Work in a Changing World," the theme for the convention, is a global refrain as people in many different situations and geographical locations move toward re-definition, re-orientation, and re-newal," said NCTE president-elect Miriam T. Chaplin. The theme was chosen by Chaplin, who heads the convention planning committee. "The global movement is spurred by the phenomenal changes that have occurred in the economic, political, and social landscape of the world in the past ten years," Chaplin continued.

In announcing the theme and asking for proposals, Chaplin encouraged programs that "foster strategic-and future-oriented action that will challenge the potential of teachers and students to cope with change."

The inservice opportunities will begin on Wednesday, November 16, with all-day preconvention workshops and the opening of the three-day convention of the Conference on English Leadership. Thursday's schedule includes additional workshops, meetings of the three NCTE Sections, and the Opening Banquet with Cornell West as guest speaker.

Major luncheons with guest speakers, among them Elliot Eisner, Orlando Taylor, and Sonia Sanchez, are scheduled for each day of the convention, Friday through Monday. General sessions are slated for Friday morning, featuring a speech by current NCTE president Janie Hydrick; Sunday morning, highlighting award announcements and a speech by incoming president Miriam T. Chaplin; and Monday midday, featuring poet Nikki Giovanni as speaker.

Again this year, the Annual Business Meeting for Board of Directors and Other Members of the Council will be held Friday evening. The exhibits of professional materials will open Friday noon and close Monday noon. The complete convention program will be mailed to preregistrants two weeks prior to the start of the convention.

More than 400 concurrent sessions will be offered Friday, November 18, through Monday, November 21. The formats range from panelist presentations, individual presentations, roundtable discussions, panel and audience discussions, statement and counterstatement presentations, and questions and answer sessions.

Special features among the concurrent sessions include book talks (sessions where members meet with a moderator for informal talk about a title of special interest), research-related programs, an "author strand" of talks, and "rainbow strand" sessions that focus on issues and strategies related to teaching and affirming culturally and linguistically diverse students.

The convention headquarters hotel is the Clarion. Most of the sessions will take place at the nearby Orange County Convention Center.

The Convention Preview, with complete program information and registration forms, will be mailed to NCTE members in August.

Preconvention Workshops Planned for Orlando Convention of NCTE

The Orlando convention will offer teachers at all levels a wide selection of one and two-day preconvention workshops Wednesday and Thursday, November 16 and 17. In this preliminary list, letters after workshop titles indicate the teaching level on which the workshop focuses: **E=Elementary; JH/MS = Junior High/Middle School; S = Secondary; C = College; G = General Interest.**

In addition, a half-day Minority Involvement Workshop has been set for Friday morning, November 18, by the NCTE Minority Affairs Advisory Committee.

The three-day convention of the Conference on English Leadership will take place Wednesday-Friday, November 16-18.

One-day Workshops, Wednesday, November 16

Learning to Write through Authentic Use: Our Contexts, Ourselves, Our Evidence, sponsored by the NCTE Committee on Teaching the Conventions of Writing within the Context of the Student's own Writing (E)

Connecting Language Arts and Assessment (E-JH/MS-S)

Experiencing Literature: Teaching Literature, sponsored by the California Literature Project (E-JH/MS-S)

Views From the Middle: Teachers' Perspectives on Early Adolescent Learning (JH/MS)

Achieving Excellence in Student Literary Magazines (JH/MS-S)

Challenge, Compromise, and Change in Portfolio Use (S)

Teachable Moments in the Culturally Diverse Classroom (S-C)

Expanding the Canon: Enriching Reading and Writing Processes (C)

A Multicultural Sampler: Voices of Authors, Poets and Teachers (G)

Defining and Redefining Gender Issues in the Teaching of Reading and Writing, sponsored by the NCTE Women in Literature and Life Assembly (G)

Exploring Worldwide Collaborative Teaching/Learning Technologies, co-sponsored by the International Consortium of NCTE and the NCTE Committee on Instructional Technology (G)

Zora Neale Hurston's Native Village: A Literary Mapping (G)

One-day Workshops, Thursday, November 17

Songs of Experience: The Child as Survivor in Children's Literature, sponsored by the Children's Literature Assembly (E)

Tapping Multi-Intelligences in the Multicultural Classroom (E-JH/MS-S)

Portfolio and Task Development in the New Standards Project (E-JH/MS-S)

Teacher as Poet, Classroom as Studio — But How? (JH/MS-S)

Teaching What We Cannot Know — Literature in Middle and Secondary Schools (JH/MS-S)

Teaching African American, Asian American, Hispanic, and Native American Women Writers: Insights and Strategies, cosponsored by the NCTE Committee on Racism and Bias in the Teaching of English, The NCTE Minority Affairs Committee, the NCTE Black Caucus, and the NCTE Latino Caucus (S-C)

Workplace Writing and the English Curriculum: Defining the Future Together, sponsored by the NCTE Committee on Technical and Scientific Communication (S-C)

Cultural Studies: Approaches to Text and Context (S-C)

Beyond the Cognitive Domain: Frontiers in Teaching the English Language Arts, sponsored by the NCTE Assembly on Expanded Perspectives on Learning (G)

Defining Ourselves through Communication, sponsored by the NCTE Standing Committee on Affiliates (G)

Fighting Back against Attacks on Professionalism, sponsored by the NCTE-SLATE Steering Committee on Social and Political Concerns (G)

Extending Classroom Walls: Using the Internet to Teach Writing and Literature, sponsored by the NCTE Assembly on Computers in English (C)

Language and Cultural Diversity, Annual Colloquium of the Conference on English Education (G)

Impact Conference (G)

What is a Writing Center?: Models for the 1990's, sponsored by the National Writing Centers Association: An NCTE Assembly (G)

Two-Day Workshop, Wednesday-Thursday, November 16-17

Coming of Age in an Age of Change, sponsored by the Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of NCTE (JH/MS-S-C)

Recent Releases From NCTE Publications

Inviting Children's Responses to Literature: Guides to 57 Notable Books
Edited by Amy A. McClure and Janice V. Kristo
Publication Date: March 18, 1994

In *Inviting Children's Responses to Literature: Guides to 57 Notable Books*, Amy A. McClure of Ohio Wesleyan University and Janice V. Kristo of the University of Maine have compiled a practical collection of ideas that encourage teachers and students to take a fresh look at children's literature. The book, published by the National Council of Teachers of English, offers plot summaries and suggested teaching strategies for 57 notable children's books.

McClure and Kristo write in their introduction that children need to feel good about themselves and to make sense of the world. "Reading good literature, and then responding to it through talk, writing, and drama," the editors go on to say, "helps them to begin to figure out how the world works and what their place is in it."

Approaches to the books highlighted in *Inviting Children's Responses to Literature* are written by members of the Notable Children's Trade Books in the Language Arts Committee, which is affiliated with NCTE's Children's Literature Assembly. Each year, the committee selects the most outstanding trade books for enhancing language development among elementary and middle school children. The selections include poetry, historical fiction, picture books, realistic fiction, fantasy, folktales, biographies, and nonfiction.

Among the books for which plot summaries, teaching suggestions, and lists of related books are provided are *Amazing Grace* by Mary Hoffman, *The Celery Stalks at Midnight* by James Howe, *Galimoto* by Karen Lynn Williams, *Little Tricker the Squirrel Meets Big Double the Bear* by Ken Kesey, *Thunder Cake* by Patricia Polacco, and *Woodsong* by Gary Paulsen. Also included are works by Virginia Hamilton, Avi, Patricia MacLachlan, and Arnold Lobel.

The teaching strategies included for each book offer a wide range of possibilities, from dramatization to storymapping to journal writing. One important goal of all the strategies, say McClure and Kristo, is to stimulate critical thinking that leads readers to new insights. Moreover, they say, "We want your community of readers to discover how words can express just the right feeling, make characters come alive, or help them discover what makes them human as they chart their reading travels, both to the world they know and to places they have yet to discover."

Inviting Children's Responses to Literature is a rich resource for any preschool through eighth-grade teacher who is interested in helping children develop their abilities to use language imaginatively.

(Inviting Children's Responses to Literature: Guides to 57 Notable Books. Amy A. McClure and Janice V. Kristo, editors. 145 pages, paperbound. Price: $12.95; NCTE members, $9.95. ISBN: 0-8141-2379-1. LC: 93-46088. Audience: pre-K through grade eight language arts teachers, curriculum planners, and teacher educators. Available from NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Rd., Urbana, IL 61801-1096. Stock no. 23791-0015.)

Colors of a Different Horse: Rethinking Creative Writing Theory and Pedagogy
Edited by Wendy Bishop and Hans Ostrom
Publication Date: March 21, 1994

Co-editor Hans Ostrom of the University of Puget Sound writes in the introduction to *Colors of a Different Horse: Rethinking Creative Writing Theory and Pedagogy* that among teachers who react to the abundance of theories which can drive classroom teaching by retreating into so-called theory-free teaching, creative writing teachers represent a disproportionate share. He and co-editor Wendy Bishop of Florida State University believe resistance to theory can lead creative writing teachers to use familiar, but not necessarily sound, teaching methods. The essays in *Colors of a Different Horse,* published by the National Council of Teachers of English, examine what takes place in the creative writing classroom, and why.

Even the most antitheoretical reader should not be put off by these essays, however. Written as they are by men and women who are themselves creative writers, the essays couch discussions of theory and practice in imaginative and engaging prose. In a set of essays on the creative writing workshop, for example, Eugene Garber and Jan Ramjerdi of California Sate University-Northridge share an exchange of letters triggered by Garber's curiosity as to how the environment of workshops changed from one of "gentle formalism" to one that is contentious and problematical." He and Ramjerdi go on to examine the place of the writing workshop in graduate academic programs.

In a later essay, Ann Turkle of Florida State University poses questions to which she and four other writers/graduate students/teachers—Julene Bair of the University of Iowa, Ruth Anderson Barnett of Grossmount Community College, Todd Pierce of the University of California, Irvine, and Rex West of Florida State University—respond: How do they balance the three roles? How does the graduate student perspective influence their teaching? How does their teaching affect their own writing? The essayists respond to each other's responses as well, creating a lively dialogue on some interesting issues.

Subsequent essays address the theoretical contexts of creative writing: classroom practice; imagination, oral literature, and collaboration; and creative writing in a computerized world. Co-editor Wendy Bishop closes the collection with an essay in which she describes her own journey through undergraduate and graduate creative writing programs, and how it left her feeling unprepared to teach others. Bishop recalls for the reader the process by which she came to terms with the deficits her own creative writing education had left her, and how she learned to like teaching creative writing.

Bishop's essay ends *Colors of a Different Horse* on a high and affirming note. It is followed by an exhaustive bibliography, with entries grouped in such categories as "Discourse Theories," "Journals," and "Writers on Writing." The comprehensive list of resources alone is the worth the time and attention of creative writing teachers. To think, it is but a bonus in this thorough, and thoroughly enjoyable, discussion of creative writing instruction.

(*Colors of a Different Horse: Rethinking Creative Writing Theory and Pedagogy*. Wendy Bishop and Hans Ostrom, editors. 316 pages, paperbound. Price: $22.95; NCTE members, $16.95/ ISBN: 0-8141-0716-8. LC: 94-7323. Audience: college-level creative writing and composition teachers and writing center instructors. Available from NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Rd., Urbana, IL 61801-1096. Stock no. 07168-0015.0

Two-Year College English: Essays for a New Century
Edited by Mark Reynolds
Publication Date: March 25, 1994

As Jefferson Davis Community College's Mark Reynolds points out in the introduction of *Two-Year College English: Essays for a New Century*, there is at least one two-year college in every congressional district in the United States. The nearly 14-hundred two-year colleges in this country enroll almost half of all students in higher education, many of whom fall into the category of "nontraditional college student." In this collection of essays, published by the National Council of Teachers of English, Reynolds introduces the reader to the students who bring a wide range of needs and learning styles to the two-year college, the English courses and programs designed to meet their needs, and the faculty that rise to meet the many challenges of two-year college teaching.

Janice Albert of Las Positas College opens the section on students with a moving essay which captures both the frustration of not being respected by university colleagues and the joy of making a difference in the lives of students who, in a different educational setting might be deemed unreachable. In all the essays in this section, the reader gains insight into the many interesting students taught by two-year college English teachers—the undereducated men and women who suddenly find themselves without jobs and needing new skills; the retirees who are hungry for continued intellectual stimulation; the recent graduates who want a gradual transition from high schools to universities.

Leaving this section with a richer understanding of the two-year college population, and a deeper respect for the courage with which many people face the difficulties within their lives, the reader encounters several essays which describe innovative approaches to curricula that meet the unique needs of the two-year college student. Claudia Barrett and Judith Wootten present Kent State University-Salem's multidisciplinary first-year program, which helps underprepared students reach their potential for successful baccalaureate study. Nell Ann Pickett of Hinds Community College draws upon her own extensive experience in an essay on teaching technical communication. Other essays address honors English programs in two-year colleges, the role of the electronic network in higher education, and ways to integrate scholarship on women and people of color into such disciplines as business, composition, and nursing.

Finally, the reader meets the faculty of the two-year college. Among them: Al Starr of Essex Community College who shares his love for the "endless possibilities" offered by teaching at the community college—the opportunity to teach many different types of students in a variety of settings, and to design courses that interest him as well as his students; Karen Hodges of Northwest Arkansas Community College, who offers a perspective on two-year college teaching that puts the instructor in the role of a business executive; and, Keith Kroll of Kalamazoo Valley Community College, who looks at the history and future of preservice training and development of two-year college faculty.

In his preface, Reynolds wishes that his book could have addressed all of the salient issues in two-year college teaching. While that wish cannot come true, his hope that this thoughtful collection of essays will stimulate discussion is sure to be realized.

(*Two-Year College English: Essays for a New Century*. Mark Reynolds, editor. 241 pages, paperbound. Price: $19.95; NCTE members, $14.95. ISBN: 0-8141-5541-3. LC: 93-46898. Audience: two-year college teachers and teacher educators. Available from NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Rd., Urbana, IL 61801-1096. Stock no. 55413-0015.)

Guide to Home Language Repair
Written by Dennis Baron
Publication Date: March 14, 1994

"Dr. Grammar" is back with an illuminating if sometimes irreverent look at the English language. Five years after his *Declining Grammar and Other Essays on the English Vocabulary* was published, the University of Illinois' Dennis Baron examines Americans' obsession with grammar and usage, and how the flexibility and fluidity of the English language affect our notions about what is and is not correct English. Like the earlier book, *Guide to Home Language Repair* is published by the National Council of Teachers of English.

In frequent appearances on his university's public radio station, Baron calms the minds of listeners who are haunted by the possibility that their own language use, or that of their neighbors, is incorrect. He draws upon that experience in a chapter entitled "Questions and Answers," in which he responds to such compelling queries as, "Is *all right* one word or two?," "Can you end a sentence with a preposition?," and "Where does the comma go?"

Baron goes on to confront the popular image of the English teacher as a card-carrying member of the language police, who "in their tireless efforts to purify our speech. . . manage to remind us that language is a minefield for which they have only pieces of the map." He looks critically at such past and present attempts to play off the linguistic fears of Americans as 1928's "Pronunciphone Method" and modern usage guides. Baron concludes that the only surefire way to increase one's familiarity and comfort with words and their use is to read and write.

In subsequent chapters, Baron examines such issues as whether the English language is dying, double standards and plagiarism, political correctness and language taboos, and the relevance of spelling bees in this age of spell checkers. In an entertaining twist on top ten lists, the reader learns what Baron's "five best words of the '80s" are, as well as what he perceived to be the most important words of 1990, the best words of 1991, and new words for 1992. He comments on the increasing use of vanity phone numbers, what Baron calls "phone words" (for example, 1-800-CLUB MED), and draws an interesting analogy between zoos and dictionaries.

If this all sounds like a pretty free-ranging address of matters of the tongue, it is. But throughout the *Guide to Home Language Repair*—at each point where Baron encourages the reader to relax in the face of the seemingly redundant, such as "free gift," the objective "I," and the maddening choice between "hanged" and "hung," and to understand rather than condemn linguistic aberration—it is clear that this free-for-all on English is being conducted by someone who clearly loves the language—past, present, and future.

(*Guide to Home Language Repair*. Dennis Baron, author. 163 pages, paperbound. Price: $16.95; NCTE member, $12.95. ISBN: 0-8141-1942-5. LC: 93-49855. Audience: English language lovers, academic and otherwise. Available from NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Rd., Urbana, IL 61801-1096. Stock no. 19425-0015.)

Proposal for ACTE Fall Conference
October 14-15, 1994
Troy State University, Troy, AL

Presenter: ______________________________
School: ______________________________
Home Address: ______________________________
City/State/Zip: ______________ Phone: ______________

Names of additional presenters, if appropriate:
Presenter: ______________________________
School: ______________________________
Home Address: ______________________________
City/State/Zip: ______________ *Phone:* __________
Presenter: ______________________________
School: ______________________________
Home Address: ______________________________
City/State/Zip: ______________ *Phone:* __________

Title of workshop: ______________________________
Appropriate grade levels: ____ K-3 ____ 4-6 ____ 7-9 ____ 10-12
____ College ____ General

Brief Description:

One sentence descriptor (for program) of your presentation:

AV equipment: ______________________________
Chair: ______________________________
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ALABAMA ENGLISH

Spring 1995

Volume 7

Alabama Women Writers

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Volume 7 **Spring 1995**

ALABAMA ENGLISH

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Editor's Introduction

David W. Chapman
Samford University

Southern women. The image is distinct in many minds—elegant, delicate, antebellum. *Southern writers.* Another image comes to mind—eccentric, nostalgic, isolated.

In this issue, our guest editor, Rosemary Reisman, has brought together a collection of essays that reveal the diversity of women writers in Alabama. They are rich and poor, famous and obscure, of different races, of different times. It is tempting to look for generalizations and categories that bring them together—the love of the land, the shadow of the War, the concern for race relationships. Each of these generalizations, however, covers up as much as it reveals. In a time, when even the term "American literature" has come under fire as too ethnocentric, one wonders how it is possible to defend a subject even more narrowly conceived.

Given the difficulties of defining a Southern writer, trying to define Alabama writers presents an even greater challenge. After all, I doubt that many authors think of themselves as limited to a geographical boundary as narrow as a state. Even those that might be self-consciously Southern writers are presumably speaking to the nation and even the world. Northerners are, in particular, often fascinated by what they perceive to be the eccentricity of Southern life. And some Southern writers have found their most appreciative audiences in countries beyond our borders.

Perhaps the justification for this focus on Alabama women writers can be found within ourselves instead of in these writers and their works. Whether native Alabamians or newcomers to the state, most of us who live here have developed an attachment for Alabama's people and places. When Vicki Covington writes about the swan ornaments in front of the Galleria in *Gathering Home*, she writes from her own experience, no doubt, but she writes from ours as well. The pleasures of recognition and shared memories are dear to us all. I have often wondered if John Grisham self consciously chose to mention nearly every major Southern city in *The Firm*, hoping that all these Southerners would feel themselves connected to the book. The landmarks we encounter in such books are a kind of alma mater we sing to shared heritage.

The reason for our focus on women writers is also in ourselves.

We value women's voices and "ways of knowing," and it seems appropriate to focus on these voices, particularly when they have been silenced or ignored or unappreciated for so long. It has been a struggle to gain recognition for women writers who either "didn't exist" because their works had been forgotten or who "weren't of the same quality" because they didn't fit a definition of literature that excluded them. We hope that this issue of *Alabama English* will contribute toward both the reclamation and recognition of important women writers.

In "Racy Religion and Religious Races: Theological Views and Ethnic Attitudes of Bible Belt Southerners," Elaine Hughes notes the continuing influence of "black and white" thinking, both in religion and racial matters. She finds convincing arguments for the enduring effects of race and religion in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* and Mary Ward Brown's *Tongues of Flame*.

Race is also at issue in Nancy G. Anderson and Robbie J. Walker's discussion of two antebellum novels set in Alabama. Lella Warren's *Foundation Stone* and Margaret Walker's *Jubilee* both treat the same state, the same period, and the same classes of people. Although works of fiction, both novels admit questions of historical accuracy and authorial bias. Anderson and Walker provide insight into the web of influences that resulted in these books—the authors' lives, their family histories, the editorial process, and the intended readers.

Emma Coburn Horris foregrounds the question of women's ways of knowing in her discussion of Helen Norris. By pairing Norris's philosophy of fiction ("The Self and the Matrix of Fiction") with one of her short stories ("The Quarry"), she is able to compare Norris's theoretical position with her actual work. The result, both in its consistencies and contradictions, is illuminating of a feminine aesthetic.

How long does it take to be an Alabama writer? Rebecca Harding Davis was five years old when she left the state, but Deandra Little notes the continuing influences of the Southern concept of womanhood on her life and fiction. From the South she gained a more realistic conception of the Southern woman, but she also felt the constraints of a hierarchical, male-dominated society.

A writer almost by accident, Ruby Pickens Tartt began her career collecting black folksongs and folklore. With the encouragement of John Lomax and others, she gained the confidence necessary to get her work into print. Alan Brown's account of Ruby Pickens Tartt's life and work not only brings attention to a deserving writer, but reminds us of the important work accomplished by the Federal Writer's Project at a time when federally funding for the humanities is being questioned.

Kathryn Tucker Windham is another folklorist whose work is brought to light in this issue. Her anecdotes sometimes dwell upon great moments as seen through the lives of ordinary people. The results are sometimes heartwarming and sometimes horrifying, but they are the stories that define us.

As these contributors demonstrate in their criticism, Alabama women writers resist generalizations, and perhaps this is for the best. Generalizations are, more often than not, shallow and misleading. I suspect we are more in need of the individual and the particular than the universal and the general. We hope that this issue of *Alabama English* will stir interest in these writers and their works and an appreciation of the unique contribution each of them brings to the Alabama experience.

I especially want to thank Rosemary Reisman who served as the guest editor for this issue. Her understanding of Alabama women writers made this volume possible. All of us who teach English and language arts in Alabama owe her a debt of gratitude.

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Racy Religion and Religious Races: Theological Views and Ethnic Attitudes of Bible Belt Southerners

Dr. Elaine Hughes, University of Montevallo

When asked why she always writes about race and religion, Alabama author Mary Ward Brown replied, "Well, that's all there is. Those are the main two subjects in the South" (Stephens 3). And these two subjects seem intimately linked in what they reveal about southerners—their theological views and their ethnic attitudes. Shaping these attitudes is a great fear—fear of displeasing God—and a subsequent repression—repression of natural instincts and passions, including the freedom to love. This necessity for restraint and denial is so imbued in the culture that children learn to accept concepts before they learn definitions. This prevailing attitude produces jokes that evoke nervous laughter from those who have grown up, for example, in a predominantly-Baptist environment—jokes such as, "Why do Baptists not make love standing up?" Answer: "They're afraid someone will think they're dancing!" And perhaps only a Southerner, born in the Bible Belt fundamentalist theology, understands the urgency in Jem Finch's reply to his father that his, Scout, and Dill's strip poker game was played "just with matches" (Lee 59) and not with playing cards.

These views thus provide the basis for the simplistic separation of good and evil into white and black, into acts of God and of Lucifer, into tension between the soul and the flesh. The taboos are prevalent for both blacks and whites in their practice of their religion, but they become more pronounced in the admonitions against intermingling of the races. The denial of sexuality, sensuality is a *command* for each race, a *mandate* for the two races. Harper Lee and Mary Ward Brown are Alabama authors who understand these underlying views and who examine in their fiction the results of such beliefs on individuals and on a changing society.

The religious fundamentalism of Southern society is not greatly different from that of the Puritan world depicted by Arthur Miller in his play, *The Crucible*. As he writes in the play, "Ours is a divided empire in which certain ideas and emotions and actions are of God, and their opposites are of Lucifer. It is as impossible for most men to conceive of a morality without sin as of an earth without 'sky'" (Miller 33). In the Southern Bible Belt culture, this concept in the twentieth century dictated that no one attended "picture shows" or played ball on Sundays, and that young boys and girls did not swim together in the same pool any day of the week. This repression of arousal of the senses or titillation of the imagination is akin to the attempts of the Church in early years of modern Europe to suppress the "resurgence of the Dionysiac forces it had crushed long before" (Miller 35)—those forces that were manifesting themselves in the nightly assemblies of the young women of the town, often with their favorite young men, which the Church promptly condemned as orgies and witchcraft.

The Puritan faith, of course, was founded on a belief in the necessity of stripping religious practices of all vestments, all adornments, all richness of beauty and indulgence of the senses. The worship service was reduced to the simplest of sacraments and to bareness of structure. Psalms could be sung, but without musical accompaniment. This denial of the sensual nature of man thus leads to an unconscious conviction that "sex, sin, and the Devil" (Miller 35) are inextricably linked, and this conviction, as with the Puritans, is often used "to whip men into a surrender to a particular church or church-state," as Miller puts it (34). Harper Lee, in her 1960 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and Mary Ward Brown in her collection of short stories, *Tongues of Flame*, explore these sexual undertones that permeate the two foundations of Southern society, its religious views and racial attitudes.

At the age of six, Scout Finch, Harper Lee's narrator in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, knew well the signs of "sinfulness." Boo Radley had manifested these during adolescence when he fell in with some of the Cunninghams from Old Sarum and "formed the nearest thing to a gang ever seen in Maycomb" (Lee 14). As Scout, in her innocence, concedes:

> They did little, but enough to be discussed by the town and publicly warned from three pulpits: they hung around the barbershops; they rode the bus to Abbottsville on Sundays and went to the picture show; they attended dances at the county's riverside gambling hell, the Dew Drop Inn and Fishing Camp; they experimented with stumphole whiskey. (59)

And though Scout had no understanding of the term "strip poker," she knew that she, Jem, and Dill had all been saved from dismemberment by Jem's quick reply to his father that they had not used cards in their fabricated gambling escapade by Miss Rachel's fishpool—"just matches" (59). As Scout knew from her early impressions, "matches were dangerous, but cards were fatal)".

The admonitions against indulgence of the senses are reiterated in Miss Maudie Atkinson's explanation to Scout about distinctions between a "hard-shell" Baptist and "just a Baptist." As Miss Maudie instructs Scout, "Foot-washers believe anything that's pleasure is a sin. Did you know some of 'em came out of the woods one Saturday and passed by this place and told me me and my flowers were going to hell? . . . . They thought I spent too much time in God's outdoors and not enough time inside the house reading the Bible.'" Of course, she adds that "footwashers think women are a sin by definition," and Scout concludes that must be "why Mr. Arthur stays in the house, to keep away from women" (49).

These fundamentalist views are more forcefully portrayed in Lee's character Dolphus Raymond, who understands the need of people to blame the Devil for what they do not understand. Dolphus Raymond has chosen to live his life apart from the segregated society of Maycomb, a society that condemns him as a "sinful man who had mixed children and didn't care who knew it" (203). He is a man whom Scout finds fascinating in that he "deliberately perpetrated [the] fraud" that he was "in the clutches of whiskey" because, otherwise, people would not understand that he chose to live as he did because he wanted to live that way—free to cohabit with the black woman of his choice, free to treat a black man like Tom Robinson with respect. Mayella Ewell, on the other hand, is not willing to admit her 'dance with the devilish spirits" and seeks instead "to get rid of her own guilt" (206). As Atticus Finch says to the jury at the close of Tom Robinson's trial:

> [Mayella Ewell] has committed no crime, she has merely broken a rigid and time-honored code of our society, a code so severe that whoever breaks it is hounded from our midst as unfit to live with . . . She knew full well the enormity of her offense, but because her desires were stronger than the code she was breaking, she persisted in breaking it. . . . What did she do? She tempted a Negro. . . . She did something that in our society is unspeakable: she kissed a black Man. . . . No code mattered to her before she broke it, but it came crashing down on her afterwards. (206)

Margaret Walker, in her biography *Richard Wright: Daemonic Genius*, writes of the effects of these "fundamentalist form[s] of Protestant Christian religion that [are] conservative and Calvinistic to the extreme point of asceticism" (33). The ascetic beliefs of Wright's family's faith forbid eating pork or cooking with "pork, lard, fatback, bacon, or ham grease," and one could burn in hell forever for attending movies, listening to the radio, dancing, or playing cards. Walker recounts the "psychological and repressive effect [of these teachings] on the women in Wright's family" who "embraced the biblical sexual myth—that sex is sin, the Original Sin, that death and hell are man's punishment for indulging in sex." Walker contends this sexual myth is "at the core of racial antagonism" (34) in the deep South. As she explains:

> The white man exploited black women and men for both their sex and their labor. Black people were considered amoral. Black men were painted as over-sexed and as potent as animals. The white woman was seen as pure and an angel on a pedestal. The black woman was painted as evil, a witch, immoral, and a natural whore. The religious black woman believed in sexual submission to her husband for procreation only. Sex was never regarded as pleasure except in the sporting world. For the white man, the worst thing was a black man intimate with a white woman. For the black man the worst thing was a black woman intimate with a white man. The lynch rope was the symbol of death for the black man as punishment for the "sexual" crime of rape. This sexual myth was reinforced by fear, violence, hatred, and sexual jealousy. (34)

As Walker says, some black women tried to escape these ascetic bonds by joining the Methodist Church. Harper Lee comments on this attitude when she portrays the situation of Scout finch, who as a Methodist had felt this ostracism from the dominant Maycomb religious community of the 1930's: she reminded Miss Maudie that their family was not allowed "to take communion" (Lee 49) with the foot-washing primitive Baptists, because their religious beliefs were not so clearly defined.

In *Tongues of Flame*, Mary Ward Brown explores the rebellious effects of these fundamentalist teachings on both white and black members of a changing and changed Southern society. Brown portrays in "Disturber of the Peace" the broken life of Jeanette Martin, who is jilted at the altar by Frank Wilson, "a dedicated churchgoer, Sunday School teacher, youngest of the deacons [who] would soon rival his father with a record length of service" (Brown 56). Jeanette had held to her belief in the Puritan concept of the religious faithful taught in her Baptist church: she chose an appropriate career—that of a school teacher—she gave up her church and attended the Methodist services regularly with Frank; she moved back home with her mother to plan for the appropriate wedding; she carefully stored the traditional wedding gown in a plastic bag to await the climactic day of the marriage vows. In short, she lived her life according to the ascetic boundaries of her fundamentalist church teachings. And, one day, Frank "[went] off to a CPA meeting in New Orleans and [fell] in love with somebody else" (51). Jeanette had believed the promise of her fundamentalist society: chastity and purity of the female spirit would ensure her place on that pedestal. She had had no reason to question the appropriateness of her choice of lifestyle; after all, "in Martindale everyone went to church except intellectuals, alcoholics, and a few eccentrics" (56). But Frank's refusal of her chaste love changed Jeanette's views about her life: "She no longer went to church, said prayers, or felt there was anyone to pray to. Where had God been when Frank was in the French Quarter of New Orleans, falling in love with an 'executive secretary?'" (52). She lashed out in her anger and grief by indulging her senses, gratifying her physical desires—the antithesis of her religious teachings. "Food became a solace" (51) to her; she gained 19 pounds. She became involved with her doctor, Jim Wells, and had sex with him frequently—"at six a.m. or 10 p.m., whenever he could manage to misappropriate the time" (50). She found the clandestine act much like eating chocolate, and "without wanting candy but desperately wanting something, she would eat nuts, nougats, creams, soothed at the time but sorry later." But Jeanette could not escape the piercing rays of the cross erected on the church steeple across the street from her apartment—the cross that seemed to single her out as the fallen one. She protested this distinction because she felt it was fate, not her volition, that had driven her into the arms of Dr. Wells. Her "sin" occurred because she had gone to him for help which "had been like walking into a trap" (54). Jeanette could not escape her religious inheritance: over her entire existence, "loomed a cross—garish and artificial, but still a cross" (57). Jeanette sought to overthrow the bonds of her society's beliefs by unleashing her physical, sexual desires; but the taboos were too strong, the concepts too deep. Seemingly, "the darker the night became, the brighter the cross would shine. . . . night after night" (59). There was no relief from the bondage of her inherited beliefs: "She no longer tried to escape. Like an animal picked out of the darkness by the hunter's light, she stared into the heart of it, mesmerized and blind" (61).

In "Beyond New Forks," Brown portrays the frustration of two matriarchs of the deep South society, religious women who embraced the view that sexuality and sensuality are sinful and manifestations of the devil at work in the world. Both women cling to those things they value from the past—bonding of families, nurturing of children, love of the land. Though both accept the reality of the changes brought by the demise of the Southern plantation system, neither recognized the deeply ingrained disdain for those middle-class capitalist aspirations, the desire for wealth and economic status which are manifestations of sensual gratification. Both Queen Esther, the black maid, and her former white mistress (known only as "Miss") lament the state of affairs in the new South of the eighties where it seems that all sense of values is lost to the encroaching idol of materialism. This new world in which they find themselves is populated by a younger generation of blacks like the Queen Esther's granddaughter Lou Annie who wears pink tank-tops and mini skirts and works for money, not for pleasure or pride in her menial labor. Though Queen Esther's mantel proudly displays two pictures of "Jesus and Martin Luther King. . . . in gold frames and in color, one on each side for balance" (161), she fails to understand her granddaughter's refusal to accept her subservient role in the hierarchical society, just as her white mistress mourns her children's lack of interest in preserving their heritage and fulfilling the responsibilities of their gentility. In an intimate exchange before Queen Esther's humble hearth, these two religious women, black and white, discuss the morals of their offspring:

> "[Lou Annie's] just a whore, that's all," [Queen Esther] said. . . . She looked directly at me. "She don't want to work. Don't none of 'em. And she likes that kind of a life, drinking, dancing, smoking that pot. Sleeping all day and carrying on all night. It ain't no excuse."
>
> "Well, she' not the only one, Queen," I said. "My children are no angels. They drink, and smoke dope too, right upstairs, and think I don't know. And who knows what else they do when the boys bring those girls home." She said nothing. (160)

These two matriarchs are living in a changing South where the fundamentalist religious teachings of years past seem to have lost much of their power. The black Queen Esther laments the fallen state of her granddaughter who has made the choice to indulge her senses. Queen Esther cannot understand that for Lou Annie the choice was one of freedom, freedom to choose her fate. The white narrator understands only that Queen Esther cannot live by any other code than that of the Old South, a code which dictates a clear distinction between black and white, between good and evil. And though her own children are indulging in lascivious lifestyles, she knows very well that, in the Southern culture, it would never be the same:

> But I couldn'go on. There was no way to talk about this, like race. It was race, actually. One of my sons was in his last year of medical school, the other on the law review at the university. My daughter would never be a whore.

> Thinking it, knowing it only made me feel guilty, and worse. (160)

Neither Queen Esther or the narrator can find the freedom to escape the bonds of her heritage. Their greatest indulgence is consumption of a small amount of beer, and they laugh nervously at the narrator's suggestion that she might lock up the big house and "go hunt another husband" (161). She can no more leave her land or her legacy than Queen can leave her shanty near the big house. They are left, two lonely widows in the dark, unable to reach out for anything beyond hope for redemption of the younger generation from its sinful, lustful ways and the belief that "when their time comes,. . . . [they will] stand up and do right" (162).

In her title story, "Tongues of Flame," Brown depicts the despondency when even this hope for redemption is gone. Dovey Goodwin, "a farm wife, middle-aged and overweight, with a sweet face and brown eyes" (76) has spent her life in the Rehobeth Church, where she has come every Sunday for services and every Saturday for "dusting and cleaning" (77). Dovey could not imagine life without her church.

But Rehobeth is like many other contemporary churches in the South, especially rural ones. Some members had moved away, but "the majority had simply lost interest and, more often than not, stayed home on Sunday morning" (75). It is rapidly losing membership, and the remaining members begin their attempts to save it. They call in the Reverend Zack Benefield, evangelist, "like a doctor to a patient."

Like Jonathan Edwards's famous sermon to the parishioners at Enfield, Benefield's intent is to reinvigorate, to bring life to the religious for members of Rehobeth. Ironically, in bringing the passion of the mystical experience back into the church, Benefield unleashes the fetters on repressed sensual desires, and the members are moved in a way they have never been moved before. Brown stresses the sexuality of the event with emphasis on the physical, animal aspects of the characters and the elemental needs of man, such as food. The act of eating becomes a sensuous ritual. All the unattached women in the church want "to feed" the visiting evangelist. Dovey has succeeded in getting E. L. Nichols, the town drunk, to the revival by "feeding" him nightly. She and her husband, Floyd, have sought to befriend E. L., she out of faith for his redemption, Floyd out of simple kindness, not religion. Dovey's sensual tendencies are evident in the joy she takes in serving her husband a "perfect piece of pie" (83) and, even more, in the pleasure she gets from watching E. L. eat.

Dovey's nightly prayers take on a new dimension during the revival. Since childhood, she had gone through the ritual of praying for "friends and loved ones, ... for the sick and needy, . . . [for] daily strength and guidance for herself . . . . for sunshine or rain for the crops" (83). In times of trouble, Dovey "stayed on her knees overlong," (20) and Floyd would move to the far side of the bed. On the third night of the revival, Floyd suspects Dovey is praying for E. L. and his soul because she prays longer (83). But as the reader discovers, Dovey's dream during that night is not of E. L.'s soul:

> [She dreamed] E. L. was in bed with them, and she was in the middle. Floyd slept soundly, but she was awake and aware that E. L. was too. She wished E. L. would move closer, and he did. When he put his arm around her and began to fondle her breast, she was flooded with pleasure. She awoke shocked and ashamed. (83-84)

Reverend Benefield's sermon the next night is passionate and sensual, rhythmically structured with his voice "vibrat[ing], then soar[ing] [as] it rose to the ceiling and resounded, amplified. It plummeted to a whisper and rose again, stronger than ever. He threw back his head and reached up for handfuls of heaven, looked down into a flaming abyss. He took off his coat and flung it on the chair" (86). Brown dramatically punctuates the scene with a description of Benefield's spent condition after the climax of his sermon. And as their voices join in singing "Revive Us Again"—all four verses—the people in Rehobeth Church are moved by the Spirit. They give up their physical addictions—their packs of cigarettes, their joints, their pills, their whiskey bottles—and relinquish their souls to the grace of God. E. L. Nichols puts his cigarettes there, too, but leaves the church hurriedly. Dovey fears that the preacher has gone too far that night and prays to the Lord to help E.L. through this turning point in his life; she pictures him 'passed out in his truck or his unmade bed, sick of Rehobeth, and sick of her for ever getting him there" (89). She imagines "him sober, in a clean blue shirt, sitting beside her and Floyd with every pew in the church filled, as tonight."

Dovey's hopes are flung into the "flaming abyss" when, during the night, the church goes up in flames and the drunken E. L. is dragged from the fiery structure, nearly suffocated. The image Dovey sees is that of E. L. lying on his back, with "the coat to his suit spread beneath him like failed wings" (90-91). The church members see the hand of God in their saving all but one wall of the heart pine church; the preacher has helped put out the fire that he had helped to ignite. But for Dovey Goodwin, there is no end to the torment. She placed her faith in the fundamental teachings of her church, and that faith is dashed into the fiery furnace along with her hope for E.L.'s redemption. Floyd and the preacher see "nothing. . . . ruined except the wall of a church," but Dovey knows that "her mind still blaze[s] out of control, and there. . . . [is] no one to put it out for her. Not Floyd. Not the preacher. No one" (92).

The passion of revival in the Rehobeth church is shorter-lived than that of Jonathan Edwards' Great Awakening. The faith of the Dovey Goodwins of the South fails them. Faith in a hierarchical system of community structure supported by fundamental religious beliefs collapses under the weight of its caste system, a caste system that denies freedom to twentieth-century females and blacks. Their belief in an economic system built on the foundation of aristocratic honor and integrity crumbles before the bulldozing enterprise of invading industrialists and entrepreneurs. The Bible Belt becomes the Sun Belt where family land holdings are now timberlands owned by Northern paper companies and the only church growing in membership is the Catholic. The pulsating, throbbing rhythm of this new South is that which Mary Ward Brown describes in "Beyond New Forks," that of the "large transfer truck. . . . going by on the highway. We could feel its vibrations, smell its hot, acrid breath. It stopped conversation and drowned out the music, but the beat throbbed on" (157). The beat is that of the Lou Annies of the New South, who wear pink tank tops and miniskirts and work for tips, not pats on the head; The beat is that of the Dill Harrises and Jem Finches who shed tears over the fate of a black man who dares to show pity for a lonely white woman; the beat is that of the Frank Wilsons and of the Queen Esther's sons who dare to flee the repressive bonds of their legacy—their legacy of racial and religious attitudes where everything is white or black, an act of God or that of Lucifer.

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Foundation Stone and *Jubilee*: White and Black Views of the Antebellum Heritage in Fiction

by Nancy B. Anderson and Robbie J. Walker
Auburn University at Montgomery

> We are formed by the past. How we think, how we react to the occasions in daily life, the vocabulary we use in speaking about the past—all are legacies. Studying the past may help us understand better how we came to be who we are. These discoveries in turn help us decide that which we want to retain from the past and that which we want to reject. By discovering that our lives are historically conditioned, we find some freedom. We know that which is does not have to be this way. (Marius 4)

Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom and Simon Legree, Margaret Mitchell's Mammy and Prissy, Scarlett and Melanie—though fiction, they have become history. But how much depth or realism exists in these stereotypes? Did the authors' biases—or prejudices—beget the characters?

Two of Alabama's native daughters—one black and one white—used their home state and the same general period of history that inspired Stowe and Mitchell: Alabama during the nineteenth century. Though both writers were born in Alabama, their families moved away when the daughters were quite young. But both grew up hearing the legends of ancestors, especially their great-grandmothers who became the inspiration for their fictional heroines. Lella Warren, in *Foundation Stone*, devotes much of her narrative to the Gerda Whetstone's pioneering days in the state before the war; the novel ends shortly after the defeat of the South. Margaret Walker, in *Jubilee*, tells of Vyry's days on an antebellum Georgia plantation and devotes more attention to the struggles of her heroine as she moves to Alabama after the war.

But how accurate are the pictures of the South in these two novels, or are the works the consequences of the authors' racial and cultural pasts? Did either writer create realistic, believable characters of all races? In these historical fictions, what philosophy guides the white masters in their treatment of their slaves? Is there friendship, or even a close relationship, between white mistress and black servant? Does a writer of fiction, even historical fiction, have an obligation to be objectively realistic? Or is fiction "alternate history," reflecting authors' perceptions? There are numerous scholarly publications struggling to answer these questions today: *Six Women's Slave Narratives* and *Bullwhip Days: The Slaves Remember*, Dorothy Sterling's *We Are Your Sisters* and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's *Within the Plantation Household*. These are also valid questions to apply to works depicted as "historical fiction."

Certainly, Lella Warren thought she was capturing the true South, at least the South her family had known. Warren was born in Clayton, Alabama, in 1899. Although she lived in the state less than five of her 82 years, she grew up with stories about her ancestors and their contributions to the settling of Barbour County. As early as 1927, she began her research for a novel devoted to the untold story of Alabama pioneers like her great-grandmother Lucinda Warren, who became the fictional Gerda Whetstone. When *Foundation Stone* was published in 1940, it was praised for its fictional rendering of Alabama's history. The reviewer for the *New York Herald Tribune Books* said: "Research has gone into this book, and it is masterfully woven into the fabric of the tale" (Field 5). The *Washington Times—Herald* described it as "a novel with characters that come alive, the tale of a typical family of settlers and a vivid picture of American history which has never before been treated in fiction despite its importance and its inherent color and drama" (Eliot 6).

Warren was proud of the section on the settlement of Alabama; she firmly believed she had used her research accurately and brought it to life in the Whetstones. She kept hundreds of pages of notes and long bibliographies, verifying her efforts at capturing the "true South," at least the one she found in the sources she consulted and in her family's oral traditions.

In her story of Alabama's history, Warren treated the relationship between whites and Indians with sensitivity. White man was culpable for the Indians' fate—a responsibility that she emphasizes again and again. At one point Warren describes Indians as "the race that was stilled into a bronze immobility the better to bear annihilation" (125). Gerda's husband, Yarbrough, is "shamed at the part he and his kind were playing in the eviction called the Treaty of Cession" (126).

But Lella Warren's presentation of Blacks in *Foundation Stone* is not so simple or so sensitive. In her treatment of Blacks, she reflects not only her upbringing but also the prevalent social view. Society's judgments are evident in suggestions from the editors—white editors—at Knopf. On May 31, 1939, less than one year before the book was released, Warren's editor, Bernard Smith, wrote her: "I think you do a little too much with the Negroes. . . ." A list of "Suggestions for Revisions" from someone at Knopf reiterates that recommendation: "We want less about the Negroes. . . ." So, Warren cut the draft, omitting a long passage describing Gerda's arrival in South Carolina from New York. In the deleted section, Gerda's pride in Pokey's roguish wit contrasts with her assessment of the slaves on the Home Place as "dawdling," "underfoot," "sullen," "pilfering."

Any discussion of the antebellum South leads to a debate over how slaves were treated: did white masters treat them kindly in order to get the most work out of them, or were the beatings more typical? Warren builds this argument into her fiction in an argument between Yarbrough Whetstone and his sometime neighbor and future son-in-law, Jerard Malone.

> [Malone:] "It beats all how you ever get anything out of either your beasts or your blacks, when you're so soft-hearted.
>
> They'll get the upper hand if you're not manful enough to deal them out some healthy whippings regularly."
>
> [Yarbrough:] "My dogs . . . hunt well, my mules plough steady, and my hands keep the weeds chopped out fair enough. Then why should I be forever frailin' my critters as you recommend?"
>
> [Malone concedes:] "You do seem to make out better than I do in spite of all my big holdings."
>
> [Yarbrough sums up his philosophy:] "You have to see for yourself what negroes are up to. I don't turn my back on them long at a time. Whipping's necessary sometimes, but I think my way of partly babying them and keeping sharp track of them prevents more mischief than punishment does." (221-222)

Warren apparently endorses Yarbrough's practice by showing Malone's troubles resulting from his absentee-landlord approach. Even women debate the issue when Gerda and her daughter Lucinda (Jerard's wife) echo the sentiments of their husbands in an argument over the slaves.

In the "Suggestions for Revision" an editor comments: "Pages 308a-310 [page numbers in the typescript] again a static passage introduced only to *theorize* about the treatment of slaves. We can well spare it." In the margin in Lella Warren's handwriting is her response; "Condense—but keep[.] We cannot spare it." Thus, the debate remains in the final draft; the author obviously prevailed, if in a shortened version.

Scholarly debate rages not only over the treatment of slaves but also over the related issue of slaves' reactions to emancipation. Fictional—and scholarly—works present two extremes: the slaves' immediate departure to take advantage of freedom or their remaining on the home place, motivated by loyalty or fear. At Whetstone Stand former slaves come to their former mistress with their fears of being sent away. Gerda meets them with her trusty Pokey right behind her. The Blacks express gratitude for Gerda's reassurance that "Work is your share, and care for you is my share." Afterwards she wearily sinks down, thinking, "I must keep them from any fear of Emancipation. It's a boogy, to them, like the fear of being orphaned, after the way I've always looked after them" (539). Her emphasis is on caring for their basic needs, food and clothing. In one scene, this apparent "concern" for their well-being reaches an extreme: soon after settling in Alabama the slaves come into the Whetstones' house as "a treat to see how white folk's victuals looked, lying on their plates" (108). And the Whetstones—adults and children—take for granted the sexual appetites of the slaves. Thus, in this fiction, taking care of these basic animal needs is sufficient and apparently commendable. Inherent in Warren's portrayal of Blacks is the premise that black man is white man's burden.

But Warren does create some Blacks as individuals, most notably Gerda's personal slave, Pokey, who stands by her mistress after Emancipation. Warren depicts the typical strong bond between mistress and slave, with owner dependent on slave in the tradition of Scarlett and Mammy. Gerda, even in her fifties, seeks solace from her former slave, now faithful servant. But Warren makes an effort to go beyond the stereotypical mammy with a red bandanna around her head. In New York Pokey is essentially mistress of the house, waiting on Gerda's grandfather and rearing the young Gerda. She proudly retains that place of privilege in South Carolina and certainly in Alabama. In that southern wilderness, as Pokey stares into a kitchen fire, she ponders "something that went back in her blood to a circle of fires in an even more brooding forest, on a continent she had never seen" (105).

But Pokey never ponders her own freedom. Even with her African heritage, her New Orleans training, her ability to read and write, and her singing of Anglo-Saxon songs, Pokey is a black slave—later servant—living in a "white-washed cabin" (223) decorated with "white folk's cast-off finery" and smelling of "bacon grease, brewed chicory, and purloined perfume" (224). Pokey acts on behalf of her mistress, even when she initiates the task. When slaves begin to dream of freedom, she scares them with tales of the horrors of living in the north—the cold and the loneliness. Once when she does not succeed in accomplishing something she wants to do for her mistress, Pokey mourns that "she had failed Miz Gerda, besides losing favour in her own eyes . . ." (225).

In contrast to the loyal Black, Warren depicts some worthless or even savage and sadistic whites. One such character is a Whetstone, Wayne, a son Gerda finds hard to accept as her own. But Wayne is punished for his evil: his body is discovered with a voodoo sign on it and secretly buried.

Ultimately, readers of *Foundation Stone* must conclude that they are seeing the "true South" of a white author writing for a predominantly white audience: Lella Warren is a product of her past, her white heritage. Some critics would draw similar conclusions about the influences informing another Civil War novel *Jubilee*. The latter work by a writer of African descent recounts many of the same events, while simultaneously revealing cultural biases of the author.

Jubilee chronicles the life and struggles of a slave woman born on a Georgia plantation. The novel, a fictional dramatization of the life of Margaret Walker's great-grandmother, spans the Antebellum years, the Civil War years, and Reconstruction. Margaret Abigail Walker, born in Birmingham, Alabama, began conscious consideration of her Civil War novel in the 1930s. Three decades passed before the publication of *Jubilee*, a work that won praise for the author's ability to convert "the raw facts of a painful past into a work of art" (Barksdale and Kinnamon 644). The heroine of *Jubilee* is Vyry, the plantations owner's daughter who served as handmaid for her half sister and later as head cook for the John Dutton household. Heir by blood, but not heir of privilege, Vyry embodies the legacy of the turbulence hovering over the unsettled South of the nineteenth century.

Plantation lore is replete with accounts of dependent slaves seeking the continued favor of their masters after the Emancipation. Walker deviates from this tradition and depicts a situation more illustrative of self-determination and dignity. In contrast to Warren's description of slaves overwhelmed by the prospects of independence, Walker's depiction is consistent with John Hope Franklin's description in his classic work *From Slavery to Freedom* of "the . . . humanitarian document [that] gave hope to millions of Negroes that a better day lay ahead. . ." (Franklin 225). Franklin's characterization here does not deny historical claims of slaves so confused and dependent that they opted—indeed even begged—to remain on plantations, but it does admit another perspective so often implicitly denied in plantation lore.

Walker's treatment of the issue emphasizes this alternative dimension of reactions to the Emancipation. Her description challenges accounts of slave panic and indecision, suggesting instead a dramatic exodus from the plantation. She describes a group of soldiers with "more than a mile of freed slaves following the army . . . They were in wagons and on foot, riding mules and driving little oxcarts. There were grayhaired men and women, young mothers with their babies at the breast and streaming lines of children walking" (281). This scene is certainly at variance with the notion of sentimental slave allegiance and indicates the slaves' belief in their ability to survive outside the paternalistic oversight of plantation masters. This spirit of independence receives embodiment in Caline's declaration. Caline, who had spent her entire life on the plantation, declared, "I ain't got no where to go, but I'm gwine. I'm free and I ain't staying here no more" (284).

Vyry's decision to remain on the Dutton plantation is markedly different from Pokey's decision in *Foundation Stone*. Pokey seems oblivious to the notion of freedom, apparently not only resigned to—but content with—her status as Gerda's servant. But Vyry actively longs for freedom more than a decade before the Emancipation. She even initiates actions to gain her freedom, actions including both straightforward negotiations with Marse John and devious strategies as well. The hope of freedom is never far removed from her active consideration. Vyry, holding a status of leadership similar to that held by Pokey, makes no attempt to discourage other slaves from leaving the plantation. She bases her own decision to stay primarily on her mental promise to wait there for Randall Ware, a free black man who fathered her two young children. Her statement "I ain't got nowhere to go neither, but I'm dutybound to wait" (285) evinces a self determination inconsistent with plantation lore. After Union soldiers attacked Miss Lillian and left her physically and mentally impaired, Vyry demonstrates compassion: "I can't go off and leave her helpless like and sick in her mind" (302). This decision, though, is marked by compassion for the person she loved and played with in childhood rather than psychological attachment to a system that compromised her humanity.

Walker also fails to confer credibility to the myth of warm, enduring relationships between white mistresses and their black servants. Gerda and Pokey in *Foundation Stone* maintain a relationship of trust and sharing, though the relationship falls short of absolute reciprocity. The relationship between Big Missy and Vyry in *Jubilee* stands in sharp contrast to the devotion and warmth dramatized in Gerda's perception of Pokey as "the one person who had never failed her" (627) and Pokey's reference to Gerda as "Sister God." Walker portrays Big Missy as heartless and malicious, actively seeking opportunities to humiliate and torture Vyry.

Gerda's head in Pokey's lap as she seeks comfort from Pokey has its antithesis in Big Miss's throwing the contents of the slop jar in Vyry's face or hanging her in the closet for punishment.

Bonds between Vyry and Miss Lillian are stronger and more closely approach traditional stereotypes. But Big Missy's attitude limits the possibilities for full closeness between Vyry and Lillian. Intervening years and circumstances reinforce these limits as Vyry takes on the job of family cook. Vestiges of an earlier closeness, however, reemerge when—after her wedding ceremony—Lillian plucks a fresh orange blossom from her bridal bouquet to give to Vyry, and Vyry expresses her confidence in Lillian's right to happiness. And when Big Missy dies, Lillian says to Vyry, "I'm all alone now. Please don't leave me" (267). The request in this instance, though, seems to derive from need and loneliness rather than from genuine affection. The two intermittently share moments suggestive of communion, one such moment occurring as they sit on Marse John's veranda: "The children and Innis Brown [the man Vyry later marries] with Miss Lillian rocking. . . The summer then was like an idyll, a season of peace, when all the agitation of the violent world around them seemed suspended and they felt secure" (297). At their last meeting, Vyry tearfully tells Miss Lillian that she understands what she is trying to say although Miss Lillian is actually incoherent. The closeness of the moments between Vyry and Miss Lillian, though, is implied and lacks the conscious concern and sharing that seem so natural between Gerda and Pokey.

Walker's portrayal of Marse John is considerably more sympathetic than is her treatment of Big Missy, Marse John's major flaw perhaps being his indifference toward Vyry. When he reprimands Big Missy for her harsh treatment of Vyry, his interest is in Vyry's future worth as a slave rather than interest in her as his own daughter. And when he dies, Vyry has "no tears to shed for him. True enough, he had never been as cruel to her as Big Missy but neither had he ever showed her any parental love" (197). Despite this flaw, Walker creates distance between Marse John and the serious atrocities inflicted upon slaves on his plantation. When Grimes, the overseer, beats two elderly slaves and possibly sets fire to the cabin to cover his deeds, Marse John is incensed and rehearses the family tradition of benevolence and compassion for the older slaves: "My father never believed in selling slaves when they got too old to work," he recalls. "They could always live in peace and die on the place" (135). Walker does attribute to Marse John some humane qualities but undermines them by setting the positive qualities against the backdrop of his lack of concern for Vyry's worth as a human being and as his daughter.

Jubilee, as might be expected, emphasizes the harshness and inhumanity of the slave system, this emphasis deriving from the unresolved emotions it evokes in the African American consciousness. Critics may well question the lack of balance in Walker's character portrayals. She assigns to Big Missy no redeeming qualities and attributes to Vyry a magnanimity that challenges the imagination. Near the end of the novel as she reprimands Randall for harboring grudges and hate, Vyry rehearses incidents of cruelty suffered at the hands of Big Missy.

> Big Missy was mighty mean to me from the first day I went in the Big House. . . She emptied Miss Lillian's pee-pot in my face. She hung me up by my thumbs. She slapped me . . . and kicked me. She cussed me and she worked me like I was a dog. They stripped me naked and put me on the auction block for sale. And worsetest of all they kept me ignorant so's I can't read or write my name, but I closed her eyes in death, and God is my witness, I bears no ill will. (404)

The portrayals are indeed black and white, the artistic decision no doubt designed to dramatize the horrors of the institution of slavery and to dramatize the full implications of the legacy. This perspective carries with it the pain—and the bias—of the African American Writer. In contrast, Warren's depiction of this "peculiar institution" in *Foundation Stone* is more humane and subdued although that work also communicates the injustice and contradictions inherent in the slave system.

Foundation Stone and *Jubilee* indeed confirm the relevance of social and racial legacy. Both works are essentially consistent with the historical record, yet the authors' reconstructions are at variance. Each writer brings to the historical moment her own subjective recreation of this turbulent period in our national history. The differences are no doubt the result of numerous forces. Perhaps the tales recounted by their forbears were selective and carefully edited, retaining only those emphases that rendered the realities more palatable. The motivations attending the tales of the forbears—in all probability—bore subtle self interests, requiring both embellishments and deletions. And there is, of course, the cogent reality of the social environments in which the authors operated that inevitably influenced the artistic presentations. The works, considered jointly or individually, dramatize the ambiguity of "alternate history." Lella Warren and Margaret Walker retain historical integrity in their presentations, but both necessarily yield to an artistic subjectivity reflecting different interpretations of and reactions to historical reality.

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NCTE Names Orbis Pictus Award Winner

MINNEAPOLIS, MN,—The selection committee for the 1995 Orbis Pictus Award for Outstanding Nonfiction for Children has announced its winner. It is *Safari Beneath the Sea: The Wonder World of the North Pacific Coast*, written by Diane Swanson, published by Sierra Club Books. The award is presented by the National Council of Teachers of English. Evelyn B. Freeman of The Ohio State University at Newark, chair of the award selection committee, made the announcement during the Elementary Section Luncheon, an event of the NCTE Spring Conference taking place at the Hyatt Regency Minneapolis.

Freeman also named three 1995 Orbis Pictus Honor Books: *Wildlife Rescue: The Work of Dr. Kathleen Ramsay* by Jennifer Owings Dewey, published by Boyds Mills Press; *Kids at Work: Lewis Hine and the Crusade Against Child Labor* by Russell Freedman, published by Clarion Books; and *Christmas in the Big House, Christmas in the Quarters* by Patricia C. McKissack and Fredrick L. McKissack, published by Scholastic.

The Orbis Pictus Award commemorates the work of John Comenius, *Orbis Pictus: The World in Pictures*, published in 1657 and historically considered to be the first book actually planned for children. In making its selection, the committee considered books' accuracy, organization, design, writing style, and usefulness for classroom teaching in grades K-8.

Presentation of the award, in the form of a plaque, is scheduled for November 18 at the Books for Children Luncheon during NCTE's Annual Convention in San Diego.

For nomination forms for the 1996 Orbis Pictus Award, write to Evelyn B. Freeman, The Ohio State University, Newark Campus, University Drive, Newark, OH 43055-1757. The nomination deadline is December 31, 1995.

The Myth and the Matrix: Helen Norris's Portrait of the Artist

Emma Coburn Norris

Where does the material world that we all share end and the world of the dreamer begin? Can stories reveal the answer, or contribute to our seeking? How do these apparently genderless worlds mesh? Do women's dreams offer a meaningful way to stitch them together? Can they unite in one piece with "Not a seam to spoil it," as described in Helen Norris's poem, "The Needlewomen"? When reading Norris's fiction I feel like the woman depicted in this poem, who walks home from church in broad daylight and crosses a creek only to discover something beyond the ordinary merging with this sensible world: "Not God and angels, nothing at all like that, / But just another world that bloomed from this one." The walker found that "the more she looked at this world. . . / The more the other one was there."[1] To shift this experience from the reader's terms to the artist's—they seem interchangeable here—when does the familiar Scheherazade, whose stories serve the practical goal of staving off death (Holdheim 253), cease resisting and begin to cooperate with something else, so that she becomes a new creature, the "Conjure Woman" in another of Norris's poems, who can cast spells?

The artist's involvement with such questions is addressed by Norris in her 1991 essay, "The Self and the Matrix of Fiction." Reaffirming her support of the deliberate intention to make art, as contrasted with the work of crafting or promotional activities, she labels the artist "a fakir, at once the wonder-worker and the confidence-man" to emphasize the mystery, the trick, in the creative process (259). This trick is no respecter of persons, for Norris's artist is just as awed by the mystery as the reader is, probably even more so. Unlike Scheherazade, this artist will not give in to the interruption of dawn or adapt it to her practical purposes (Holdheim 255) but will instead seize the "chance to make something out of whole cloth" (Interview 57).

Giving an interesting twist to the artist's fundamental talent for empathic experience, Norris phrases the question of the two worlds, introduced above:

> Is there, besides the self and the not-self, a here and a 'not-here' that can enter the realm of here? Or a 'not-now' that can enter the realm of present time? And how, in

> heaven's name, does either enter the artist-self? ("Matrix" 263).

To ask questions "in heaven's name" here instead of making assertions returns us to the significance of interaction between the dream-world and the phenomenal world. In aggregate, Norris's questions and mine thus formulate a serious epistemological issue, which I shall address—or at least outline—in the following pages. The questions can be summarized perhaps as an essentialist's dilemma: Is there a female way of knowing and if so, how does it operate? That is to say, does the resulting knowledge have anything universal to reveal, or is it exclusive and thereby limited in regard to audience? I hasten to add the following: If its audience is limited, whose fault is that?

Admittedly, I am operating here from Norris's established turf and I am, in her terms, an academic "on the outside looking in" (Interview 55). I accept this attribution, for it enables me to see further implications for ongoing discussions within feminist theory which Norris does not address in what she calls her "discursive" writing ("Matrix" 260). She is however, characteristically frank about such matters in one of her short stories: "The Quarry." First published in 1983 and included in the O. Henry anthology for 1985, "The Quarry" is as close to a feminized credo as can be posited from a heterosexual female's point of view.

It is possible, therefore, to place "The Quarry" alongside the recent essay, "The Self and the Matrix of Fiction," for the purpose of shedding light on the larger epistemological issue introduced above. In discussing these works, with the 1988 interview and other informal conversations as a gloss, I shall attempt to illustrate, if not to solve, some crucial questions in feminist aesthetics: the possibility of a female subjectivity in light of essentialist controversies and the so-called loss of authority in general; the dialectic of language and silence in the consciousness of the female artist; the value of the feminine in naming and initiating, which empowers the artist to interweave "the here and the not-here" as well as "the now and the not-now" with "the self and the not-self."

Initially, we can examine Norris's personal scrutiny of her life, drawn from various sources, as background for her written assertions: her first and final view of the artist includes no reference to gender. Norris, like most of the writers observed publicly in the twentieth-century context, "wants to be thought of as a writer, without qualifiers" (Reisman 1). She claims to have "always been a writer" (Interview 55). This consistent awareness of her calling places her within the tradition of nineteenth-century women novelists who saw themselves as "artists rather than careerists" (Baym 178). Even when she was devoting her conscious daily self to home and family, Norris continued to write and was recognized with local and regional prizes. "Women are so timed," says Norris. "There are very few years when they can have it all" (Interview 55). Although this sounds like the biology-as-destiny view of an essentialist, we must remember first, that the statement appears in the midst of much stronger assertions of an artistic self-concept. Second, Norris has gone on record acknowledging what we would call the "accommodation" stage of her career (as opposed to her art). She admits that in the thirties and forties under the tutelage of Hudson Strode she created only male protagonists. Her rationale for this accommodation is clear:

> "Protagonists had to be men if they were to be taken seriously. Men have generally been held in higher esteem, especially in terms of undergoing change. . . I chose male protagonists because I wanted to write about someone who would be taken seriously." (Interview 52)

The perspective of a Second World War environment is at work here; but the deliberate choice was a clever career move resulting in an ultimately artistic gain. For example, she is justifiably proud of having proven "everybody" wrong who "said that women writers 'can't do men.'" When asked about her successful portrayal of males, which has attracted a substantial male audience, she responds, "Why repeat something easy? Effort is what produces art." This male audience has grown beyond the male teachers from her past to include her former student Andrew Hudgins, editors such as George Core of the *Sewanee Review* and John Curbow, who published her first poetry collection, as well as scores of male readers.

After a silence of eighteen years between the first and second novels, and an even longer one (twenty-eight years) until she regained her momentum in publishing, Norris walked away from accommodation: she left the old career strategies and the academic milieu behind, shifting female characters and her female version of narrativity into the foreground.[2] Although she recognizes "a new understanding of women that fosters their acceptance as protagonists," she is not so much changing as she is making visible the material generated during the silences. Norris's career exemplifies a familiar, understandable pattern for women in any walk of life. If this common pattern has something to tell us about the struggles of artists, about female artists, or ourselves, we let us learn from it directly through the narrative of "The Quarry." In this story Carrie, a rural woman isolated from other members of her own sex and aware of little except her will to survive, creates a language and thereby a self through an act of will, reinforced by a little witchcraft.

Carrie's story is a feminized

dialectic of silence and language. It becomes a synecdoche for representations of women as well as a dream-allegory for the artist's breakthrough or woman's freedom, or the two simultaneously, because it is unnecessary, even impossible, to separate the artist from the woman in the narrative. Such a hermeneutic is not baffling if we take Norris at her word as she locates her discussion of the artistic self in a "matrix" of fiction. The word "matrix," is fundamental to my point and, I believe, to hers: its literal definition helps us to focus on the uterus and therefore on an exclusively female environment. Readers who have difficulty accepting a portrait of the artist as an uneducated thirty-eight year-old country woman must be reminded of Norris's earlier comments on the psychological conditioning of the audience. Limitations of the audience aside, there is no more seamless merging of the two worlds of materiality and dream than that effected by Carrie's story.

Grounds for interpreting Carrie as the artist can legitimately be questioned, nevertheless, because we are given so few details of Carrie's life in the material world. The narrator gives us little because Carrie has hardly anything: even her husband Jake and his brothers, who control her existence and from whom she could traditionally borrow an identity, have little besides ability to operate huge bulldozers, backhoes, and front-end loaders in digging the quarry of the title. Under these circumstances, what is accessible for interpretation, and how can we read Carrie as woman, much less as artist? Mary Jacobus's interesting reversal of the feminist search for the woman in literary texts is illustrated by Carrie, who in an internal way is asking the question that we need answered: *"Is there a text in this woman?"* (139).[3]

The author had similar difficulties interpreting Carrie for parallel reasons: "In a story like 'The Quarry'. . . I have difficulty with the characters' voices" (Interview 53). Therefore, the reader's awareness of Carrie's internal struggle for identity must be generated out of a heavily focalized consciousness speaking our language while Carrie gives birth to another (4).

In short, Carrie and the quarry unite through the negative, unwitting agency of the men who take from them almost all they have. Carrie is just as much their quarry as that hole in the earth is; in strip-mining fashion they will gouge out all she is worth and then leave. This is their occupational custom as well as their habitual, controlling behavior. The ambivalence of the word "quarry" offers reinforcement of this control. Although the term refers literally to the open pit where the men work, Carrie feels a spiritual connection; for, having "no speech of its own when the man thunder stopped . . . like herself it waited to be given words" (20). A second meaning also applies to Carrie: "quarry," as dictionaries tell us, is

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any *pursued* object, anything hunted *down* [italics mine]. At first glance this seems to be all there is to the pun, but Norris's stories are hardly ever this simple and are never so naive as to miss legitimate opportunity to play. As the story continues we observe Carrie's reversal of her role. She becomes a pursuer of quarry which is not the men who abuse her—they are "all alike to her" anyway (17). She pursues something more important: the words by which to authenticate herself to herself.

As the narrator's consciousness brings Carrie into focus, we see her cornered, "somehow imprisoned" by the men who "have her in thrall and yet [do] not think of her" (17-18). She is "rocking" from the impact of the "man thunder" in a "fragile cage" constructed of "their will for her"—a run-down, formerly abandoned shack (18-20). Her only encounters with freedom come while the men are working: the "oven smell" of baking cornbread and watching natural beauties which form "a mothering hand on her skin" (18). As relief from her loneliness she begins regularly to leave the men talking in the house after completion of her chores. As these excursions become a habit, she is intuitively drawn to the only other part of the environment which she can recognize as being "empty like herself" (20): the quarry.

She draws closer to the edge of the pit each day, and on one visit she is standing on the edge, the next step being one that would take her into the quarry's depth, when she sees a man. She identifies him as an escaped convict, the subject of talk earlier among the men. Returning the next day she brings him gifts of food and water. Her kind gesture thus begins a regenerative process for both of them. In his drinking she senses her own nourishment and melds her desire for connection and freedom with his. As her secret sharer through the agency of the quarry, he in turn becomes a vehicle for her own empowerment. She feels strong enough only to share with him her fears in the tone of the men whose talk she has appropriated, and she commands him to leave right away. However, she remains attached to her idea of him, even after he has left. She rejoices in his escape and holds onto it, dreaming about him later.

In the next few days she makes her first attempts to establish a language among the men. They will talk about her, but they have never learned to listen to her and continue to interrupt when she is trying to make a thought real through words. The most poignant illustration of her difficulties involves a debate about language itself, strategically placed within the context of childbirth. When she drops a bowl and breaks it, Carrie interprets Jake's subsequent scolding as a veiled reference to their baby that had died immediately after birth. We learn more about her state of mind than about Jake, and the ensuing confrontation reveals the differences in the ways men and women argue. He responds to her in the negative:

> "There ain't no baby!"
> "There was," she said.
> "We never had nary baby. Get it outa your head. You cain' call a baby somethin' don't live."

We see the men leave at this point for the porch, Jake trying to walk away from the argument; but Carrie pursues him, standing at a safe distance and trying to touch him with words:

> "You tryin' to tell me we didn't have no baby that lived a whole day?"
> "Shut up," he said. (24)

Carrie still has no tongue, but she returns to the quarry that has one. Upon meeting the convict, she had noticed the tongue in what was becoming a mouth for her: "the giant hollow blood and orange mouth with broken teeth and down inside a band of coral clay, a raw and helpless tongue. . . . Almost all of the external environment is red and raw to Carrie, from the red dust that the men bring home from work to the stain on the convict's sleeve "that looked to her like blood" (20). Her vision of the quarry as "deeper than hell and running with blood" (25) is the most obvious signal from her raw and bleeding self.

As her obsession, the quarry becomes increasingly present in the story, just as it grows literally larger from the men's work. Nearly taking over the story, the quarry almost becomes a character with a life of it own. Carrie does not let this happen, however; in the struggle of wills which the narrator delineates, Carrie is triumphant. After her failed attempt to make a word into flesh and blood in the kitchen, Carrie goes literally to the brink of her emptiness, where she find her language:

> In her mouth was a syllable and then another with the green taste of reed along a river's edge. For the first time of all she made a word of her own . . . out of childhood and the dust in her throat and the rank bitter smell of her hands in the weed. *She made it out of nothing, the way the world was made* . . [italics mine]. (25).

From this point forward, Carrie is a creator who can take action. For example, she has immediate success in loosening a stone from the quarry by what she considers her will, as expressed in the words "fall" and "fall down." Later, when she overhears the men talking about Sam's new girlfriend and the possibility of moving another woman in, she mentions leaving to Jake. In her subsequent test of her new power, her voice is "full and gathered to a greatness" (26). Without knowing what she is doing, she joins the pagan blend of earth and sky described in ancient texts, with a creation ritual of her own devising. Nearly ecstatic from her new vision of the convict as a free man in the city, she cleanses herself with the smell and feel of growing ferns; then she repeats her new words as incantation rather than experiment. At night the memory of her dead baby blends into another vision of herself following the convict on a city street. When he throws away a half-eaten apple, she keeps its seeds in her mouth for planting later.

The final stage of her escape to freedom involves burying the last of the dishes that her mother had handed down upon Carrie's marriage. The treasured gift had been reduced to almost nothing, only a few chipped saucers and a cup, as Carrie had been reduced. Recognizing this as a compulsion beyond understanding, she nevertheless carries out the ritual of burial using a single piece on each of five days, holding back only the cup. On her last day in the old environment she puts her spell on one of the brothers-in-law, takes her cup to the rim of the quarry, and again calls upon her powers of creation, now to destroy for the purpose of creating anew (29):

> At once from top to bottom the quarry shuddered. . . . The pines above her shrieked. She had a swift glimpse of the coral tongue of clay, how it twisted and rose. The bleeding mouth tore and fell in upon itself. . . . The red and orange dust hid the face of the sun and the faceof the moon waited in the wood. (30)

The apocalyptic end of the quarry, however powerfully conveyed, does not end the narrative, because Carrie, who has fashioned herself, also tests herself. She no longer needs a language appropriated from men or from anywhere outside herself. She can speak her own language. Therefore, after spending one last night in the house, she demonstrates her independence by leaving without a glance at what remains behind.

In this story Helen Norris reveals how the artist as woman, in the words of Judith Penelope Stanley and Susan J. Wolfe (Robbins) [sic], is "constantly challenging and shifting the boundaries of English in ways most often associated with the poetic consciousness." The tradition is present, even if it seems hidden; and Helen Norris is able to mine as if it were a quarry, and to join in what these feminists call the "struggle with externally imposed silence," just as her heroine Carrie does. Thoroughly grounded "in female consciousness" [Norris's "matrix"], is the artist's "unrelenting language of process and change" (62). In a story like this one Norris can unite representation of women, woman as maker, and woman as the writing effect without accommodation.

Finally, the two works by Norris which have been addressed here are vital contributions to the current aesthetic debate over what constitutes women's writing as women rather than as mutants adapted to external authority, called "men's litcrit" by Dale Spender (119). Spender is seriously calling for the construction of "a body of knowledge based on women's experience" that is grounded in some common definitions of "what that experience is" (113). Included in these definitions would be women's "own autonomous body of knowledge about women's writing" (139).

Even without the myth delineated in "The Quarry" Norris's "The Self and the Matrix of Fiction" remains brilliant for, among other reasons, giving hints of a feminized attitude through words like "matrix." One does not want to quibble over the smaller language choices in a critical piece; but language, as Norris repeatedly states and demonstrates, makes a big difference. With this in mind, I wonder how a passage like this, "Artist-state is child-state protected and guided by a crafty mother-state of ageless knowing" (264), can co-exist in an essay which always uses the masculine pronoun for the artist. The traditional grammarian in me does not see this usage as a problem, but my theoretical side raises a larger question regarding the price ultimately to be paid for cooperating with the male-dominated system in critical discourse.

One answer, as I have posited, is to play this particular story and the essay one against the other, demonstrating a symbiotic relationship, as I have tried to do on these pages. The discursive text is incomplete without the mythic narrative, while the honesty and intellectual depth in each work makes them both gifts from the "crafty mother-state of ageless knowing." Together they make a "whole cloth" artistic statement, woven out of both the sensible and the dream worlds which we met at the beginning of this discussion and hope to meet every time we have an encounter with one of Helen Norris's creations.

Notes

[1] *Whatever is Round: Poems by Helen Norris*. Carrollton, GA: Curbow Publications, 1994.

[2] I chose William Wolfgang Holdheim's term "narrativity" as opposed to words from the same root which are so closely identified with fiction as to exclude poetry in ordinary usage, and I, too, apologize for the awkwardness of the term (226).

[3] The original question, which is Jacobus's title, is "Is There a Woman in This Text?" which is in turn drawn from Stanley Fish's *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of the Interpretive Community* (1980).

[4] Gerard Gennette's concept of focalization emphasizes the com-

bined awareness of the narrator and the character's perceptions as described in the narrative.

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An Alabama Realist: The Influence of the Nineteenth-Century Ideal of Womanhood As Seen in Rebecca Harding Davis's *Margret Howth*

Deandra Little, Samford University

Let woman exhibit strength and hardihood, and man, her master, will make her a beast of burden. So long as she is nervous, fickle, capricious, delicate, diffident and dependent, man will worship and adore her. Her weakness is her strength."
—George Fitzhugh 1854

The woman author recognized by literary historians as "one of the boldest pioneers of American realistic fiction" (Rose 166) was influenced by Alabama at a very young age. From shortly after her birth in 1831 until she was five years of age, Rebecca Harding Davis lived in Big Springs, Alabama (later to be renamed Huntsville). Though the actual time she spent in the state might seem short in comparison with her long life-span, many of her works and even chapters of her memoirs *Bits of Gossip* show that "the experience" of life in Alabama "entered family lore and the consciousness of all [her] family members" (Rose 2). Davis recalled often hearing her mother's stories of the "mixed magnificence and squalor of life on the plantations among which [they] lived" in the village of Big Springs (*Bits of Gossip* 68), and herself remembered her "sojourn in the far South. . .as an uneasy dream" which made up "a strange enchanted page of past family history" (*Bits of Gossip* 69-70).

The picture of Alabamian women that Davis retained was one quite contrary to the "picturesque idle life" (*Bits of Gossip* 69) imagined by Northern women. Instead of the laziness envisioned by many, Davis saw the daily toil that Southern women endured. With only a "few books—an odd volume of poetry and their Bibles" (69) to rely on for information, these women were not very different from other American women who were not provided with the opportunity for a rigorous education. Though allowed the chance to attend Washington Female Seminary in 1848, where she was recognized as a "superior student" (Rose 6), Rebecca Harding Davis was prevented from further formal education. Her educational experience was typical for women during that time period. Unlike her brother, Wilson, who went on to

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attend college and to work in the public sphere, Rebecca's education ended at age seventeen with her "return" to "domestic life" (Rose 6).

In her book, *Tomorrow is Another Day*, literary critic Anne Jones examines the lives of Southern women writers during the nineteenth-century. Although not specifically included in Jones's analyzation, Rebecca Harding Davis and many of her characters easily fit into the paradigm of womanhood that Jones describes. Davis, like other Southern women, was raised to be "physically pure, fragile and beautiful, socially dignified, cultured, and gracious, within the family, sacrificial and submissive, yet if the occasion required, intelligent and brave" (xi). The image of the Southern woman is an "extreme version" of the nineteenth-century ideal or "true" woman which emphasizes "fragility and helplessness" to the point that the protection of women seems "both essential and appealing" (Jones 5). This protection includes "protecting" women from the strain of rational thought. If a woman showed any impropriety of form (including self-reliance or independence), the masculinity of the males within her circle of influence was called into question (19). Because of its undesirability (and because it was thought by some to be impossible) intelligence in females was stifled whenever possible. Men, who were thought to be governed by "reason," were considered to be capable of logical thought and examination. As their opposite, women were believed to be governed by the "heart" and were expected to be more concerned with the home and family than with ideas or politics (Rose 9). They embodied virtue by "serv[ing] others" (Jones 9)—God, husband, family, and society. Instead of ensuring economic independence, nineteenth-century women were responsible for the "perpetuation of morality" (Rose 9).

In accordance with the ideal of the "true woman," women in nineteenth-century America were discouraged from speaking or writing publicly. Their voices were often limited and even silenced when they attempted to express themselves in ways considered inappropriate or masculine. Because, as critic Anne Jones so aptly put it, to "have a voice is to have a self" (37), these women often "blanked out their perceptions and repressed their feelings" (22) until they became both "voiceless" and "selfless" (37). Women became "wary of self-expression" (Jones 7), especially when this expression failed to meet the standards deemed appropriate for their gender. The only means available of women to offer any semblance of a "public voice" (Spencer ix) was through writing fiction. Writing was the only profession a woman of a good family could take up without "desex[ing]" herself (Jones 6). Unfortunately, the women writers of this time period were limited in expression by the predominant stereotypes surrounding their authorship. During the nineteenth century, women's fiction was viewed as "literary domesticity" (Showalter 37) and was not taken seriously. Though many women authors may have felt the ambivalence "central" to the "nonserious" nature (Jones 44) of the only literary tradition offered them, their fiction usually depicted female characters who remained safely within the confines of the domestic sphere. Any "rebellious urge[s]" felt by their heroines toward autonomy were usually "punished at the end" or at the very least "placed behind the veil of an acceptable formula" (Jones 39) in order to ensure that their works remain publishable. Encouraged to write these uncomplicated, yet marketable, sentimental novels, women writers were effectively prevented from entering the political arena. Through the influence of editors, husbands, and audiences, the voices of women writers were "appropriated for male domination" (Spencer xi).

The voice of Rebecca Harding Davis in her second novel, *Margret Howth,* was similarly "appropriated" by her editor, James T. Fields. Fields, editor of the *Atlantic* and co-owner of Tickner and Fields, was responsible for Davis's movement away from the new realism she experimented with in the "dark vision" of her first novel *Life in the Iron Mills* and her move toward "the conventional happy endings of sentimental fiction" (Rose 24) which appeared in many of her later works. The story Davis originally submitted to Fields in 1861, entitled The Deaf and the Dumb," was rejected because he was unpleased with its "narrative tone" which he described as a "pathetic minor" (30). Her reply to his rejection letter began with a justification of the "gloom" within the story; Davis wrote that her characters could act in no other way because they were drawn from life and not fantasy. However, her letter soon became an eager appeal to Fields for a list of possible revisions which would make the "rest of the picture be steeped in a warm healthy light" (Shaeffer 57). In subsequent letters, Fields encouraged Davis to redesign her novel so that it would "end in full sunshine" (Yellin 287), thus fitting more tidily within the boundaries of a typically female sentimental novel. Davis again objected to his suggestions, saying that his revisions would leave her work an empty "husk" of truth and that a happy ending for Margret who was in Davis's eyes "the completest failure in the story" (Yellin 290), would mean that her work was flawed by inconsistency. Despite her originally distaste for Field's changes, the version of her story, entitled "A Story of To-Day," was revised according to his outline before being published serially in the Atlantic. As a further irony, in the byline to her story Davis remained nameless, referred to only by the phrase "By the Author of 'Life in the Iron Mills'" (Shaeffer 57). In keeping with societal ideals, Davis's voice was silenced through redirection, and her authorship was cleverly concealed.

Many of Davis's characters especially those in her novel Margret *Howth*, embody the ideal of nineteenth-century womanhood in much the same way as Davis did in her relationship with her editor. Though Davis criticized some aspects of the nineteenth-century world-view, she maintained many of its traditional values in her life and in her fiction, especially those concerning the proper sphere for women. In her narrative tone and in her fiction, Davis "revel[ed] a desire to reconcile ambivalence toward ideas about womanhood" (Rose 9). She realized the inevitable conflict between the values of wife/mother and work outside the home, and attempted to achieve a compromise in her own life. Of the innumerable characters she created during her forty-year career as a writer, one of the best examples of this conflict is found in the life of the central female character in *Margret Howth: A Story of To-Day*. Margret Howth begins the novel by going to work outside the domestic sphere as a bookkeeper in the mill, yet ends the novel as a "happily" married wife. Unfortunately for Margret, the resolution of this conflict cannot escape the shared ideals of her society. Instead, the resolution of the novel includes the silencing of Margret's voice.

Perhaps because of Field's urgings for revision or perhaps merely as an extension of Davis's conception of womanhood, Margret Howth remains a good example of the "ideal woman." Margret Howth has neither a strong voice nor a complete sense of self-identity. Although the novel takes its name from her, the thoughts and inner feelings of Stephen Holmes and Mr. Knowles are discussed far more frequently than are Margret's. Throughout the novel, Margret's life experiences are expressed or analyzed only through the medium of other characters. Instead of being self-defined, Margret listens meekly, as other people decide her actions and define her future. To Knowles, she is a machine to be manipulated in order to further his vision of Utopia; to Holmes, a "child-woman" who needed to be taken care of; and to her parents, the means by which to stave off the poverty they saw themselves sinking into. Despite the fact that her behavior is often the most responsible in the novel, Margret is referred to as "girl" or "child-woman" by the other characters.

As shown by the diminutive terms used to describe her, Margret Howth falls victim to the assumed hierarchy of intellect and capabilities. She is silenced by the men around her and assumed to be "weaker" in intelligence and reasoning power. Stephen Holmes directly robs Margret of her voice by telling her to "let [him] speak for [her]" because he holds the "very secret of [her] being" (*Margaret Howth* 231). By assuming that she is incapable of knowing her own innermost desires and capabilities well enough to voice them, Holmes perpetuates the myth of the "true" woman. Stephen continues to define Margret's existence exactly and leaves her no room for self-expression, telling her that she will fit the nineteenth-century ideal by being "a sovereign lady with kind words for the world" (242). Because she is allowed only a vocabulary with which to proclaim platitudes and niceties instead of intellectual or moving remarks, Holmes invalidates Margret's future character development. The belief in the superiority of male intellect is not limited to Stephen Holmes. Even Margret's own father, whom she has gone to work as a bookkeeper in the mill to support, reveals his disdain for her reasoning abilities. During his philosophical discussion with Dr. Knowles, the schoolmaster, "in compassion to the ignorance of women" (42), condescendingly offers explanatory comments to Margret as she passes throughout the room. Other women in the novel similarly reflect the prevalent belief that women could not be educated to the point of self-sufficiency. The characters of Mrs. Howth and Pike's daughter Sophy are two excellent examples of women who need a husband or father to take care of them. Pike believes that his two sons have been well-educated and have nothing to "hinder [their] bein' President," yet he also believes that he must "gather up a little for Sophy" (129) until she can marry and be protected by another male. Because of her father's wishes, Sophy can do nothing other than develop into an "ideal woman" with cognition patterns more like Mrs. Howth's whose brain "took a long time for . . . idea[s] to penetrate" (255).

Both Dr. Knowles and Stephen Holmes foster Margret's belief in their superior masculine knowledge by interpreting her according to their definitions of her "heavenly purpose." First, Knowles petitions Margret to "give up love, and the petty hopes of women" (154) in order to help him create his "House of Refuge" (249). He successfully convinced Margret that his plan for her life was none other than "the work the Lord [had] left for her" (216). By aligning his purposes with religious ones, Dr. Knowles insists that Margret either conform herself to his vision or admit that she is defiling the will of God. Later, Holmes further complicates Margret's life when his interest in her is rekindled. Before Knowles's interference, Stephen felt no need to wed Margret. Instead, he had become betrothed to a woman he did not love for economic purposes. After Knowles's influence however, when Holmes was confronted with a Margret from whom "his hold had slipped" he felt the "mad desire of conquest" (225), which necessitated that he reassert his hold over Margret. During their first lengthy conversation after his recovery, Stephen defines Margret in terms of what he had "made" or "killed" as if his "manly honour" (227) has the power to create and destroy her self-identity. Margret remains a "true" woman until the end of the novel, believing Stephen "just, as only a man can be, in his judgement of himself and her," and "glad to be humbled before him" (233).

Entrapped by the demands of her society, Margret Howth was forced to sacrifice herself much as Rebecca Harding Davis was forced to sacrifice her artistic vision. Davis's story was "refashioned to please" (Shaeffer 57) her editor just as Margret's life is "refashioned" to please the men in her life. Both women, author and character alike, acquiesced to the male voices who politely demanded—"with customary kindness and patience" (56)—that they alter themselves to fit more snugly within the nineteenth-century ideal. Margret sacrificed her needs by allowing her life's works and purposes to be defined by those around her. As both Rebecca Harding Davis and Margret Howth discovered, for women in the nineteenth century, "appropriate behavior [was] demanded" and defined by a "source outside themselves" (Jones 352).

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Ruby Pickens Tartt: Alabama's Reluctant Writer

Alan Brown, Livingston University

The life of Ruby Pickens Tartt not only covered nearly a century of southern history but made a significant contribution to it as well. Born on January 13, 1880, at Livingston, Alabama, "Miss Ruby", as she is known in Livingston, acquired an appreciation for black folk songs and folklore from her father, William King Pickens, who frequently took her to visit the black renters in his cotton fields. She went to school at Livingston Female Academy, where the co-principal, Julia Tutwiler, prepared Miss Ruby for her career as a folklorist with the dictum "Notebooks are better than textbooks" (Brown 6). After studying art and English at Sophie Newcomb College in New Orleans, Miss Ruby accepted a position at Livingston Female as director of the art department (7). Eager to enhance her artistic skills, Miss Ruby went to New York to study art under William Merritt Chase. The next year, she returned to Livingston and married her childhood sweetheart, Pratt Tartt. In 1904, she gave birth to her only daughter, Fannie Pickens (9). Miss Ruby would probably have settled into the comfortable life of a Livingston matron if word of her vast knowledge of black folk songs hadn't reached the ears of John Lomax, who was the national adviser on folklore for the Federal Writer's Project (16). Accompanied by his wife Ruby Terrill Lomax, John Lomax made three visits to Sumter County in 1937, 1940, and 1941 to record the spirituals, ring games, and work songs of Miss Ruby's black friends. The more than 300 folk songs that Lomax collected and deposited in the Library of congress inspired other ethnomusicologists to visit Miss Ruby in the 1940's, 1950's, and 1960's, including Elie Siegmeister, Harold Courlander, and Byron Arnold (38-39). In his book *Folksongs of Alabama*, Arnold said, "She has done more for the cause of folk music in the state of Alabama than any other individual" (151).

Despite all of the accolades that have been showered on her, primarily by ethnomusicologists, Miss Ruby's contributions as a writer have been largely overlooked. To a certain extent, she has suffered the fate of other prominent women folklorists in the first half of the Twentieth Century. Speaking of Elsie Clews Parsons and Ruth

Benedict, who collected Pueblo artifacts early in this century, the anthropologist Barbara Babcock laments the fact that male folklorists have used the materials gathered by women folklorists without giving them full credit: "[In] this discipline..., women folklorists have been marginalized, if not rendered altogether invisible"(395). One of the primary recipients of Miss Ruby's generosity, Carl Carmer, gave Miss Ruby belated thanks for the stories that she gave him for his collection of Alabama folklore entitled *Stars Fell on Alabama* (1934). In a profile of Miss Ruby that Carmer submitted to *Reader's Digest* in 1961, he included a statement by Miss Ruby regarding all the people she had assisted: "To save me, I can't remember how many people I've helped for a day or two at a time. It's only when they came back time and time again as the Lomaxes did that I recall their names" (187).

Still, one cannot go so far as to suggest that Miss Ruby was as shamelessly exploited as so many other women folklorists before her had been. Actually, Miss Ruby harbored some very serious reservations about her own abilities to write about the material that she contributed to people she believed were more gifted than she. She began her writing career as a collector for the Federal Writers Project in 1937 out of financial necessity. Her husband had lost his job as Livingston Postmaster in 1937, and they had not enough savings to live on. Upon learning that she had been appointed chairperson of the Federal Writers' Project of Alabama, her shocked response was, "I can't write a correct sentence. I can't spell cat" (Brown 13). Speaking years later of her final decision to accept the offer, Miss Ruby compared herself to Br'er Rabbit, who climbed a tree in a tight spot because "he was 'bleeged to clum!' Writing certainly wasn't the nature of the beast in my case either" (Tartt 179).

While she was working on her first assignment, the collection of ex-slave interviews, Miss Ruby developed the approach to recording folklore that she followed religiously throughout her career: "These [the ex-slave interviews] had to be verbatim, so I learned to write exactly what the Negro said. Because of my interest in the Negro, and the fact that I'd never looked into a book on writing when I attempted to write a real story, I naturally turned to him for guidance" (181). Until the Federal Writers' Project was discontinued in December 1942, Miss Ruby continued to submit ex-slave interviews, folk tales, and life histories to the state director, Myrtle Miles, who never really appreciated the value of Miss Ruby's work. Miss Ruby traced the source of the mutual enmity that separated these two strong-willed individuals to a story that Miles sent to Miss Ruby as a guide entitled "Mary the Mill Girl": "Why, we've never had a mill down here and Marys like the class in her story. No white women in Sumter work in mills, but she [Miles] would never understand it and hated my Negro tales" (158).

Although assurances from Miles' superiors, John Lomax and B.A. Botkin, finally convinced Miss Ruby that she had done a competent job, she still did not feel confident that her work was good enough to be published. However, in 1943, she was so desperate for employment that she took John Lomax up on his offer to try to sell some of her WPA stories for her. One of the stories that she sent Lomax, "Richard the Tall-Hearted," is a shortened version of a story that she had written for the Federal Writers' Project entitled "An Alabama Munchausen." In this rambling narrative, Miss Ruby recalls her first encounter with a huge black man named Rich Amerson. While her car is being removed from a ditch that it had slid into after a heavy rain, Rich regales Miss Ruby with tales about his childhood and about a giant whose family took refuge during a storm in one of his hollow teeth. Lomax was so impressed with this story that he deemed it "a priceless piece of Negro lore" (Brown 40).

Encouraged by Lomax's appraisal of her work, Miss Ruby wrote what is probably the most beloved of all of her stories, "A Pair of Blue Stockings." The narrator of this touching story, an elderly ex-slave named Josh Horn, recalls a period in his life when he and his wife were so poor that they could afford to buy only a single pair of blue stockings. The climax of the story is a moving blend of humor and pathos. Through an intricate act of subterfuge, Josh deftly removes his stockings and gives them to his wife so that a preacher who has come to visit won't realize they have only one pair of stockings between them. The power of the story is derived from both Josh's lack of self-pity and the author's careful avoidance of sentimental commentary. The last two sentences of the story encapsulate the stoic endurance of people who have learned to accept the destiny that they have been given: "Yes, Miss Ruby, de Lord been mighty good to me an' Alice. We both is had a pair of socks an' stockin's apiece since dat year" (Tartt 114).

Another story that Miss Ruby sent Lomax, "Bing Oliver is a Pushing Man," is a humorous anecdote about a man who hitches a ride to church in a friend's dilapidated old jalopy and ends up pushing it all the way into town. In a letter to Lomax, she said that this story "will amuse only those who know and understand the Southern Negro, it is so typical" (173). After mailing the story off to Lomax, Miss Ruby was horrified to learn that the man who told her the story, Roy Patton, had found it in a paper-bound book of Negro jokes and short stories that had been collected by a woman from Huntsville (174).

Lomax selected these three stories from the packet that Miss Ruby had sent him and submitted them to his friend Donald Day, editor of *The Southwest Review*. The stories were published in the Winter 1944 issue under the title "Alabama Sketches" (Brown 40). Miss Ruby received the news with a mixture of joy and apprehension. In her typically self-depreciating way, she thanked Lomax for the $50 check that she had received from Day: "I've had such a nice letter from Mr. Day with the most thrillingly beautiful check I've ever had, or at least in many years. At first there was the proverbial panorama of the drowning man—only in reverse. I saw—not past mistakes, Heaven forbid—but those I might yet make" (Tartt 171). In the same letter, she repeated her belief that she would never be a writer, in spite of the proof of her ability which the check embodied: "When I was put out of the clear blue sky on the Federal Writers' Project, I had no idea on earth how to write the stories I'd been telling all of my life, for I was not then nor am I now a writer, as I have said many times" (173).

Convinced that at age 63 she was not too old to begin a new career as a writer, Miss Ruby began looking for new material to submit for publication. However, her hopes of compiling a collection of folklore were thwarted by two events that occurred in 1943. Soon after Day accepted "Alabama Sketches," Miss Ruby wrote to B.A. Botkin in Washington, D.C. asking him to send her copies of her WPA material (Brown 41). The small amount of material that she received from Botkin confirmed her suspicions that, as she confided to Lomax in a letter, "[Myrtle Miles] destroy[ed] the cream of the lot because she didn't understand the Negro" (Tartt 158). Disappointed but undaunted, she revised a few of the manuscripts and sent them on to Lomax. In addition, the illness that she had contracted in the fall of 1943 continued to plague her through the spring and summer of the following year (Brown 42). The nagging fear that she might have vaginal cancer pushed any thought of writing out of her mind until it was discovered that her sickness was the result of drainage from an infected tooth (Tartt 163).

Miss Ruby's recovery in the waning weeks of summer in 1944 was bolstered by the news that several more of her stories had been accepted for publication. "Three Animal Stories" appeared in the Spring 1944 issue of *The Southwest Review*. These animal tales, all of which had been told to Miss Ruby by Rich Amerson, are reminiscent of Aesop's fables in their wry insights into human nature. "Waiting' on de Lawd for Salvation" ends with an impatient Miss Hawk inadvertently providing Mr. Buzzard with the meal that he had been praying for. "Meetin' of de Animals to Reform" carries the message that reform on a large scale will be impossible to achieve unless it begins at home. In the third story, "The Lion and the Jackal," a jackal who aspires to be a lion learns the hard way that it is best to be what you are. The West African origin of these tales is evident, not just in the types of animals that are featured, but also in the fact that they are essentially morality plays, told in an entertaining manner (Courlander 3).

Two other stories were published that spring. "Carrie Dykes: Midwife," which appeared in a collection of stories called *From Hell to Breakfast*, is an extraordinary look into the daily life and beliefs of a black midwife in the Alabama Black Belt. Carrie embellishes the autobiographical details of her life with home-spun advice on such matters as severing the umbilical cord and disposing of the afterbirth. Carrie ends her interview with a lengthy explanation of her views of conjuring and hoodoo.

The second story, "Earthy—Anne," is the most consciously literary of Miss Ruby's works. Featured in the Spring 1944 issue of *The Southwest Review*, "Earthy Ann" is Miss Ruby's meditation on the tragic consequences of neglecting one's spiritual needs. She invests the beginning of her story with an air of Southern Gothic gloom, recounting a visit she made to an old plantation house owned by one of the local intelligentsia, Charles Darwin Hawkins. When no one responds to her "hello" at the door, she lets herself in and gazes around in search of some rare books she has come to see. The scene that greets her eyes is one of utter desolation: once elegant antique furnishings have been allowed to succumb to the ravages of dust and time. The sole occupant is an elderly Gullah Negro named Earthy Ann, who surprises Miss Ruby with her confession that, unlike most blacks in the area, she is not a religious person because Mr. Charlie had said that "'ligion was jes' a pack of foolishness" (121). Unable to read or write, Earthy Ann is a lost soul, deprived of the intellectual benefits of reading and the spiritual benefits of joining in the activities of the black church. Yet, in the face of suffering and despair, Earthy Ann retains her dignity, "accepting discouragement and defeat with that heart-breaking patience that is so characteristic of her race" (Tartt 12).

In 1945, Miss Ruby had no sooner resumed compiling her works into book form than tragedy struck once again. A tornado completely destroyed her house, burying her in a pile of rubble (Brown 44). Besides breaking her arm and spraining her shoulder, the tornado had a numbing effect on her spirit, as she confided to Lomax: "I don't suppose the results of a terrifying experience with a tornado could be called 'combat fatigue,' but if I'd been in the battle front that would be what I have" (Tartt 168). Miss Ruby's fortunes changed abruptly later that year with the publication of several of her stories. The inclusion of "Earthy Ann" in an anthology entitled *Mid-Country: Writing from the Heart of America* and "Alabama Sketches" in *The Best*

American Short Stories of 1945, caused her spirits to soar, although she still had reservations about the importance of her work: "[My stories] are, I feel, as southern as grits and gravy," she told Lomax, "yet I have never thought of them as having any literary value. It has been an awful shock to me, not only to have them included in a number of anthologies with such distinguished company as Faulkner and Hemingway, but to have them appear in anything at all" (181).

After John Lomax's death in 1948, several people, including Lomax's son, Alan, tried to persuade Miss Ruby to write the book that had been on her mind for so long. In the 1950's, a professor at Livingston University, Dr. Robert Gilbert, recorded an interview with Miss Ruby and helped her collect her writings. She adamantly refused, though, to publish a book, claiming that such a volume would do nothing toward easing the racial tensions in the South (Brown 52). Miss Ruby spent the remaining years of her life working as a librarian in the Livingston Public Library and painting. Up to the day she died in the Sumter County Nursing Home in 1974, she viewed herself as a painter and a librarian, but not as a writer (55).

Unlike the work of most of the WPA collectors, Miss Ruby's has withstood the test of time. In 1981 Virginia Pounds Brown and Laurella Owens published *Toting the Lead Row*, containing a 55-page biography of Miss Ruby and many of her life histories and ex-slave interviews. Much of the dialect in this material was rendered into standard English, Laurella Owens said, "in the interest of readability and clarity" (60). Then in 1993 , an English professor from Livingston University named Alan Brown edited a collection of Miss Ruby's writings entitled *Dim Roads and Dark Nights: The Collected Folklore of Ruby Pickens Tartt*. The material included in this book consists largely of previously unpublished manuscripts from the Tartt collection in the Julia Tutwiler Library. The folktales, superstitions, life histories, sermons, and folk expressions are rendered in the original dialect in an effort to produce the kind of book that Miss Ruby would have wanted. In the future, collections of her ex-slave interviews, folksongs, and writings about Sumter County will also be published by the Livingston University Press in the hope that all Alabamians will have an opportunity to appreciate these stories, whose merit was readily apparent to everyone but the author herself.

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Kathryn Tucker Windham: An Appreciation

Charles Avinger, Washtenaw Community College

"Alabama, they say, is like one big front porch where folks gather on summer nights to tell tales and to talk family," Kathryn Tucker Windham writes in her introduction to *Alabama: One Big Front Porch* (7). This quote sums up both the content and flavor of Windham's writing, and helps explain why she is one of the state's most popular authors. It would be difficult to write a completely detached, objective academic article about Kathryn Tucker Windham. That's OK, though, because I don't think she'd want me to anyway. Windham is not an academic or scholarly writer in the traditional sense. She is, first and foremost, a storyteller. Children's author Zilpha Keatley Snyder says, "I resolved to be a writer after it dawned on me that there were people in this world who, instead of being scolded for being a 'storyteller,' actually could make a career of it" (14). The same could be said of Windham, who has spent her life telling the stories of her home state on stage, on tape, and in print. She has told these stories in many forms: the verifiably accurate, fact-checked newspaper articles written during her career as a reporter; the possibly true but definitely unverifiable ghost stories she has collected from across the South; and the purely imaginary legends and superstitions that pepper her collection *Alabama: One Big Front Porch*. Whatever format it takes, Windham's diligent research has done Alabama (and, indeed, much of the South) the favor of preserving a vital part of its heritage. Her storytelling talents bring this material to life, making the past, as Rosalind Laker puts it, "always within reach" (10) for present and future readers.

Windham's autobiographical *Odd-Egg Editor* recounts her experiences as a newspaper reporter in Montgomery, Birmingham, and Selma from the early years of World War II through the Civil Rights marches of the 1960's. Like her other books it is written more as a series of anecdotes and "good stories" than as a comprehensive biographical or historical account. The book is populated with colorful characters such as "Glue Fist" Hudson, shorty Peek, "Bicycle", "Billie Jean (The Bloodhound Tamer"), and Sweetnin' (a child who "assists" census-taker Windham by running ahead of her yelling, "White lady coming to take yo' senses!"[4]), along with more well-known figures: Judge Brevard Hand, Selma Mayor Joe Smitherman, and Governor George Wallace. Windham thus creates a kind of alternative Alabama history. As in her stage portrayal of Julia Tutwiler, for Windham the story of Alabama is the story of these unique and fascinating individuals, not a dry litany of names and dates. Thus, she contextualizes monumental events (Pearl Harbor, the 1961 Selma flood), places (Dexter Avenue, the Dallas County Courthouse), and issues (segregation, capital punishment) in the experiences of real individuals, many of whom she knew personally, which adds a measure of subtlety and complexity to her storytelling.

Windham's recollections create a picture of a simpler time, evoking an era almost completely different from contemporary life in every respect—social, political, economic, and psychological. In Windham's world, Judge John Baytop Scott personally reimburses an eccentric thief's victims for their losses, thus helping the man avoid prosecution. He quietly provides bus tickets for young prostitutes to return to their home towns, rather than jail them for first offenses. Windham conveys a sense of what we have lost as a society while acknowledging that all wasn't idyllic in those days. For example, domestic violence is considered routine, if not exactly condoned. When a young woman is accused of theft, her boyfriend pleads for clemency on the grounds that she deserves "nothing else done to her" because he has "already shot her and cut her," an explanation the judge apparently accepts uncritically (24). At one point, a wrongly convicted African-American man is released from jail with no compensation and no hope of legal redress—and he's just relieved to be free. These incidents remind the reader of the changes society has undergone, as do smaller details such as mention of five cent newspapers and eight cent hot dogs.

Perhaps the best examples of Windham's application of storytelling techniques to Alabama history are seen in her treatment of the Civil Rights struggles in Selma from 1963 to 1965. The events of this convulsive period are well-known. Windham writes not as an historian, however, but as a Selma resident who was deeply concerned with the fate of her home town, as well as with the broader issues at stake. We know too well the ugliness of racism, but Windham makes us understand it anew by quoting from a letter printed in the *Selma Times-Journal* after a small group of African-American children attend a service at an all-white church. A member of the congregation writes:

> Little girls, we don't even integrate with many white people. If you came to our church for a hundred years, sat in the servants' balcony, or even with the congregation, ninety-eight percent of the ladies and gentlemen of this church

> would never look around, stir, or even move a muscle. We would not reject you; we would not accept you; we would simply look around you, over you, through you and freeze you numb. (159)

The classism, racism and arrogance ill-concealed beneath a veneer of Southern politeness and religious piety are revealed here almost more chillingly than in better-known accounts of the violence that took place during this time. Yet while Windham does not flinch from detailing the open racism endemic to Alabama during this time, she also depicts the people she writes about as three-dimensional, fully-rounded human beings full of contradictions. When discussing the Selma flood of 1961, she writes of "the heroism of the men in their small boats, men who maneuvered their small crafts through swift, debris-filled currents to rescue black families whom they had never seen before and whom they would likely never see again" (148-149). She then goes on to say that "[it] was some of these same men who, a few years later, rode with Sheriff Jim Clark's mounted posse, swinging billy clubs [against civil rights marchers] with the same sense of righteousness that had spurred them to risk their lives in an angry river" (149). In her quiet way, Windham refuses to depict history in simplistic images that comfort us by conforming to our expectations. It is much more disturbing to find violent racial hatred perpetrated by people who, under other circumstances, we might like and even view as heroic.

> People have not changed in their emotions throughout the centuries, but each generation has been governed by the customs and traditions of the period into which they were born. (Laker 9)

Windham's day-to-day experiences as a reporter reveal much about the customs and traditions of Alabama in the 1940's and 1950's. Her stories recall not only racism but the open sexism that was once taken for granted as well. "You write well," an editor tells her at one point. "If you were a man, I'd hire you. But I don't want any female reporters" (2). He says this with the complete assurance and impunity of his privileged status, and she must accept it, though not happily. Counterbalancing such details, however, is a much more positive aspect of life earlier in the century, the belief in a strong work ethic that was not merely a desirable characteristic but a necessity for survival. Windham's first editor tells her, "I expect you to learn from your mistakes which, I trust, will be few. . . . Any afternoon you do not see one of your stories on the front page of the *Journal*, do not come back to work the next day" (6). Another editor's constant refrain is "Get it right. Get it right" (101), and, when disappointed with a reporter's work, he asks in an "icy" voice, "Is this the best you can do? (102). Today such comments would undoubtedly be the stuff of lawsuits and tearful recriminations on an afternoon talk show. What's interesting —and most telling about society's gradual shift in attitudes over the decades—is that as a young reporter Windham not only accepts such instruction as routine but later recalls it as necessary and beneficial to her professional growth and development. Having an editor literally rip pages out of a typewriter as soon as one finishes a sentence, all the while yelling "Write! Write!" over one's shoulder (15), might not seem the ideal conditions for writing, but the point is clear. Deadlines matter, the results are what count, and excuses have no meaning.

Alabama: One Big Front Porch is Windham's "coffee-table book," a volume whose title and appearance reflect its purpose, to unabashedly celebrate the heritage and folklore of the state. Discussing the characteristics of Southern "front porch" stories, Windham writes that "they are all alike in their unmistakable Southern blend of exaggeration, humor, pathos, folklore, and romanticism. Family history is woven into the stories. And pride. And humor. Always humor"(7). This statement accurately describes the stories in this book, which overall have a gentler, more humorous tone than some of the stories in her other books. Grim subjects such as slavery and the turmoil of the 1960's are mentioned only in passing, while the focus is on romance, fairy tales, legends and folklore. (Windham includes several ghost stories, but she presents them as curiosities, without the gruesome details found in her ghost story collections.) Eschewing the strict chronology of *Odd-Egg Editor*, Windham groups her stories loosely around places—Fort Toulouse, Goat Hill, Bon Secour Bay, a covered bridge on the Livingston University campus, Tuscaloosa—and around historical events and people such as Creek leader William Weatherford, Andrew Jackson, General Lafayette, and Hank Williams. It's an eclectic collection, with Civil War stories following animal stories, and even the recipe for "Meme's Summertime Crab Gumbo" included (19).

Alabama: One Big Front Porch is an excellent example of Windham's preservation of the folklore of her home state. Although "[f]olklore is one of the oldest forms of human creativity for which we have a written record" (Simons vii), it has until recently received relatively little scholarly attention, falling as it does between the cracks of "serious" art/literature and popular culture. Yet folklore is a vitally important part of Southern culture. As Elizabeth Radin Simons notes:

> To know our folklore . . . is to know ourselves in new ways. In the folklore of an individual or of a group, one finds "a human involvement and genuineness . . . that is not found in public expressions of national life" (Bronner 124). Viewing ourselves through our folklore is akin to looking at our lives through another lens,

> which focuses on aspects of life often overlooked or undervalued. (vii)

Since academic interest in folklore has been relatively recent, Windham's major contribution to Alabama literature has been to collect and preserve the state's folklore before much of it could die away or change beyond recognition through time.

Folklore is typically defined by its characteristics, and these qualities help explain why its preservation is a delicate and important matter. As David Laubach explains, folklore is oral, passed down by word of mouth, though it may eventually be preserved in written form. It is traditional within a particular group, exists in different versions, and is anonymous in origin (2). Windham perfectly captures the essence of folklore when she writes:

> Alabama fox hunters tell some fine tales. Mostly they tell them on dusty country roadsides or in pine thickets where they're waiting the yapping announcement that the hounds have struck a trail or sitting around a campfire drinking coffee boiled in a dented lard can. (71)

The fox hunters' stories (many of them "tall tales") are the stuff of folklore, as are the many legends, superstitions, customs, and traditions with which Windham fills her book.

Similar to *Odd-Egg Editor* and *Alabama: One Big Front Porch, A Serigamy of Stories* relates tales from Windham's childhood in the Southwest Alabama town of Thomasville. In typical "front-porch" style, Windham defines *serigamy*, an invented word used in her family, as "a whole lot, a heap of, a right smart, a goodly number" (1). Again, the emphasis here is on the positive. Windham prefaces her book with this hope:

> [These stories] reflect the freedom and security of Southern small town life in the 1920's and early 1930's. Perhaps these remembrances of my childhood will underscore the closeness that came from knowing everybody in the community, the acceptance and enjoyment of neighbors just as they were, and the laughter and friendship that bound us all together. (1)

The distinguishing characteristic of this collection is the personal nature of the stories, all drawn from Windham's own experience, rather than collected from other sources.

As in her other books, interesting characters abound. There is Little Edith, who owns a coveted scooter but is "very particular about" letting her friends ride it, saying, "You can ride my scooter down the front and around the side of the church two times. Just two times. And don't get any scratches on my scooter!" (113). Another memorable character is Mama Sue, who thoughtfully brings "gruel" whenever little Kathryn is ill—and sits beside her bed until she eats it all. Then there is Dr. White, who spends much of his time in a wicker rocking chair outside his office, and who "had been known to lance abscesses, sharpening his knife on the sole of his high top shoes, right there on the sidewalk" (99). Rather than an anthology of discrete stories with self-contained narrative structures, *A Serigamy of Stories* is essentially an extended portrait of the simple, sometimes eccentric residents of Thomasville who populated Windham's childhood. Instead of dramatic events, the stories depict everyday life in a charming fashion, as indicated by the chapter titles—"Laps and Rocking chairs," "Trains, Circuses, and Tent Shows," "Christmas." The book concludes with the author walking past her old family home now occupied by others "sitting on the front porch, rocking and telling a serigamy of stories of their own" (129).

Though Windham's subject matter has ranged from recipes and rivers to mule-stamping and buzzard counting, she is undoubtedly best known for her collections of Southern ghost stories. As Bessie Lewis points out in the preface to *Thirteen Georgia Ghosts and Jeffrey*, "Ghost stories have a very real place in the folklore and the history of a state or a nation. After all, who should be better able to tell of happenings long past than the ghosts of those who had a part in them?" (ix). Windham's first and most famous collection, *13 Alabama Ghosts and Jeffrey*, was written in collaboration with her former English teacher, Margaret Gills Figh, an authority on folklore. While all of the stories are believed to be true by at least some people, Windham and Figh maintain a neutral position. "We're not asking anyone to become ghost believers. We have simply tried to report these stories as honestly and as accurately as we can" (viii). The one exception to Windham's objectivity is Jeffrey, a spirit Windham says began haunting her Selma home during the 1960's, making sounds, moving objects, tormenting her cat Hornblower, and eventually appearing in a photograph, which Windham reproduces in her book. Windham's affection for Jeffrey has led to his inclusion in the titles of all her ghost books. (Jeffrey has, in fact, become something of a cottage industry. His likeness appears on T-shirts, pencils, and postcards, and autographed copies of the ghost books bear not only Windham's signature but "Jeffrey's" as well.)

Why are Kathryn Tucker Windham's ghost stories the most popular of all her works? Joan Aiken theorizes "that readers like ghosts and need them. . . . Most modern readers lead lives which are, to a great extent, insulated from primitive fears. But this, I believe, leads to a build-up of unacknowledged anxiety that may be liberated and drawn to the surface by the artificial alarms of ghost stories"

(10). Catharsis is certainly one of the most widely held theories explaining the appeal of supernatural literature. Aiken adds that curiosity may be another enticement, for "most people, at one time or another, wonder if there is another life, if souls linger after death, if the effect of some violent happening can remain, like an imprint or an echo, affecting the locality where it took place" (9). Indeed many of the tales in *13 Alabama Ghosts and Jeffrey* propose answers to these very questions. "The Red Lady of Huntingdon College" tells of a strange, alienated student with a penchant for red, a color found in abundance when she slits her wrists in her dormitory room. Thereafter she returns on the anniversary of her suicide, accompanied by "rays of crimson light [that] flash down over her transom" (103). As in many ghost stories, there is a link between a haunting and a violent death. Similarly, "The Face in the Courthouse Window," the ghostly imprint of a face in a windowpane in the Pickens County Courthouse Window," is said to be the image of a lynching victim whose hiding place was revealed to a mob by a flash of lightning, which engraved his likeness in the glass for all time. (Interestingly, though perhaps not surprisingly, the historical marker outside the courthouse refers to the famous face but glosses over the circumstances of the man's demise. Windham's account of the legend is apparently more complete than this "official" source.)

"Drama is the essence of storytelling" (Hailey 9), and the ghost stories Windham has collected throughout the South provide plenty of drama as well as "enlisting the imagination of [the] audience," another vital aspect of storytelling (Hailey 9). Following *13 Alabama Ghosts and Jeffrey*, Windham wrote books about ghost stories from Georgia, Tennessee, and Mississippi, a second collection of Alabama ghost stories, and a book about Southern ghosts in general. Some of the stories in *Jeffrey Introduces 13 More Southern Ghosts* are not only dramatic but truly horrifying, such as "Ghost of the Barefoot Slave," in which the horror arises not from the haunting but from the events that precipitate it—the sadistic torture and murder of slaves by an elegant New Orleans hostess. Yet even here Windham follows the lead of the great ghost story writer M.R. James, who, as Joan Aiken notes, believed "that ret*icence* was just as necessary in a ghost story as horror and malevolence. . . . It is always a mistake to ladle on the grue too fast and too lavishly; just a delicate touch at a time achieves a much stronger effect" (10). Windham's retelling of the legend bears this theory out, for her suggestion of the horrors that took place in the attic of Madame Lalaurie's mansion makes "the reader use his own imagination to envisage the horror" (Aiken 10-11).

For over five decades Kathryn Tucker Windham has called upon readers and listeners to use their imaginations to envision the horrors of haunted houses, the delights of small-town Southern childhood, and the oddities of regional legends, superstitions, and folkways. Through it all, the strong, clear voice of the old Southern storyteller remains constantly vivid, coloring the past with mystery, romance, and appreciation for a way of life now gone and nearly forgotten. Windham says, "I still find myself wanting to ask people questions that are none of my business, just as I did for years as a reporter. And I still miss knowing the behind-the-scenes parts of stories, the interesting intrigues and sidelights that never get into print" (*Odd-Egg Editor* 170). Her comment goes a long way toward explaining the essential appeal of storytelling for both the storyteller and her readers, particularly Windham's fellow Southerners. The South has a curious past, and many of its residents are curious *about* their past. Windham satisfies that curiosity, all the while making sure that "the interesting intrigues and sidelights" *do* get into print.

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EXPERIENCE UNIQUE CULTURES THROUGH SUPER

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The Glass Hammer: A Southern Childhood

by Andrew Hudgins. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1994

Reviewed by
Norman McMillan
University of Montevallo, Montevallo, Alabama

Cornbread, scuppernongs, yellowjackets, croker sacks, and collards; chopping cotton, slopping hogs, being saved, and hunting snipes; this small catalogue suggests the accuracy of the subtitle of Andrew Hudgins' fourth collection of poems, *The Glass Hammer: A Southern Childhood*. Here we have a book which renders with colloquial accuracy a concrete world familiar to most Alabamians. But Hudgins, like a modern-day metaphysical poet, finds startling correspondences at every turn which quickly move us beyond the confined world of the author's Alabama childhood to the larger world of human experience.

Hudgins' poetry is artful, but the art is largely concealed. Except for "Gospel," Hudgins uses no end rhymes. But he is a master of the more subtle internal rhyme, which, coupled with the simple rhythms he uses, gives the lines a clean sense of inevitable beauty. these lines from "Grandmother's Spit" show Hudgins' skill with sound and rhythm:

> To wipe the sleep grains from
> my eyes or rub a food smudge
> from my cheek, Grand-
> mother'd lick her rough right
> thumb and order me, *Come*
> *here.*. She'd clutch my arm and
> hold me near her face
> while, with that spit-damp
> thumb, she scrubbed the spot.

Here there is no overblown artifice or obvious contrivance, but analysis reveals that the simple spontaneity could only have been achieved by a deliberate use of ear and eye.

As the lines quoted above suggest, Hudgins' poems are quite accessible, and, since I am writing this review for teachers of English, I might add that they are quite teachable. Not only do they provide a wonderful source for teaching sounds and rhythms and figures; they deal with subject matter that interests students, particularly secondary and college-level students. While this southern childhood is not that of Everyboy or Everygirl—the delights of language and curiosities about nature are certainly more intense for him than for most—themes such as parent-child relationships, sibling rivalries, family gatherings, sex, part-time jobs, youthful games and jokes, music, and church are widely appealing. For example, these words from "Childhood of the Ancients" should get most students' attention: "Hard. You don't know what hard is boy. When I was your age. . . ." Everybody has heard some version of this old tale and has wished to protest. Hudgins' poem irreverently does so by having the father say that he "walked five miles to school and ten miles back,/ uphill both ways."

The poems also offer the opportunity of looking at point of view with students. The reader often notes in these poems a double vision, one in which the adult's experienced point of view is placed beside the child or adolescent's immediate response to events. Hudgins seems to agree with Robert Penn Warren's notion that authors should have a period for their experiences to marinate before trying to set them down, and in *The Glass Hammer* he presents his readers with a feast of well-marinated dishes. One does not for a moment think that these events he writes of are trivial, though they might have been trivial without the perspective of time.

The book ends as Hudgins confronts the question of telling family secrets. "All telling's betrayal," he says, and it is apparent that, while the telling has assuaged his anger, it has added to his guilt. But he hopes to be free of that too, to the extent possible. He ends the poem with one of his astonishing conceits:

> Everytime we moved,
> we scrubbed the old house
> clean, then scoured the new
> one. Abrasives, bleach, and
> toothpicks for the crevices.
> And if, despite the scrubbing,
> dirt remained, Mom said, "It's
> our dirt now. It's clean."

This is a fitting conclusion to *The Glass Hammer*. Through such use of imaginative language, Hudgins creates in the reader a thorough sense that poetry, both in the making and the reading of it, is a powerful means to understand ourselves and our world.

Programs and Practices: Writing Across the Secondary School Curriculum

Edited by Pamela Farrell-Childers, Anne Ruggles Gere,and Art Young.
Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1994. 280 pp.

Reviewed by
Joan Word
Troy State University, Troy, Alabama

If you are a high school teacher or administrator who wants to start a writing-across-the-curriculum (WAC) program, you will welcome the publication of *Programs and Practices: Writing Across the Secondary School Curriculum*. Anyone interested in beginning a program has many questions: How can we attract faculty to WAC? How will students react: How will parents respond to WAC initiatives? Why have some WAC programs lasted while others have not? And the questions go on and on. This book will help. Editors Pamela Farrell-Childers, Anne Gere, and Art Young have collaborated with other WAC practitioners to share some structures and strategies, to "describe and critique some ways WAC has been incorporated into schoolwide, districtwide, and statewide programs."

Programs and Practices "tells nineteen stories narrated by teachers in different disciplines and by administrators with differing responsibilities." These authors come from a wide range of schools-public and private, rural and urban, large and small. Their stories are grouped under three headings: "Contexts for Change: Problems and Possibilities," "Ways of Collaborating," and "Ways of Implementing Programs." Contributors explore issues such as politics, externally imposed evaluation, technology and WAC, and writing assessment. Altogether they demonstrate the potential of WAC to improve teaching and learning.

As you read, you will learn how teachers in Elk Grove High School used interdisciplinary teaming to increase student achievement, how teachers at Morningside Middle School collaborated with teachers at the College of Charleston to create a technology project which evolved into a nationally recognized WAC program, how the vision of the superintendent of the School District of Philadelphia resulted in the powerful partnership of two existing programs to create supportive structures for curricular reform. But these are only three of the stories that will intrigue you.

Although you will probably want to read all of *Programs and Practices,* you won't need to read it from start to finish. The editors' introduction incorporates the philosophical foundations for WAC with an overview of the text, and each section begins with a preview that enables readers to choose chapters of personal interest. I was particularly eager to read "Resistance as Inspiration in a Language and Learning Program" in the first part and "An Open Letter: Why Should Teachers Become Involved in WAC?" in the third.

Because I often want more information when I read books of this type, I was pleased to discover that this one lists each of the collaborators' schools with details such as when and how the WAC program began, a contact person's address/ phone number/FAX/E-mail, sources of funding, collaborative partners, special features, and future plans.

Programs and Practices is a book to buy for inspiration and for reference-not a how-to book. Readers who are looking for a prescribed program will be disappointed. The editors and contributors show that programs work best when they are designed by those who will implement and participate in them. WAC programs are, in fact, as varied as the schools they serve, and they deep evolving to meet changing needs.

Even though this text is written for secondary school teachers and administrators, elementary and post secondary educators may find ideas and strategies that are adaptable. Those who are seeking solutions to the problems of existing programs will be interested in how some schools have maintained programs. All readers will find encouragement mixed with caution.

While there are a number of texts about ways college and university WAC programs have been established, *Programs and Practices* is the only book I know of devoted entirely to providing similar information about high school programs. Because we have had to look to portions of other texts and scattered articles in journals, these representative stories unified by insightful editors are indeed welcome. My experiences as a secondary school teacher and as a WAC program coordinator tell me that this is a book that will serve us well. I am happy to recommend it to anyone who wants to know how a WAC program can be started in a high school.

A Very Good Place to Start: Approaches to TeachingWriting and Literature in Secondary School

Edited by Craig Thorn. Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook, 1991. 194pp.

Reviewed by
Dana Keck
Shades Valley High School, Birmingham, Alabama

At a time when administrators and pedagogies seem ready to impose more and more restrictions on the classroom, I am relieved to find a book that encourages—even celebrates—diversity. In his book *A Very Good Place to Start: Approaches to Teaching Writing and Literature in Secondary School*, Craig Thorn collected essays from teachers in the English Department at Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, and combined these essays into a book which includes everything from case studies and course designs to specific exercises and theories of the teaching of writing. Although these essays vary in content as well as approach and point of view, they all speak with the same voice: they all advocate a student-centered curriculum which meets the evolving needs of students.

Thorn divides his book into three sections, each on consisting of five essays: Introductory Writing Courses, Introductory Literature Courses, and Advanced Writing and Literature Courses. In the first section, Thorn compiles five essays that reinforce the importance of students' personal investment in writing. From the formal research paper to group collaboration, these essays all agree that successful writing empowers students, and these teachers offer course designs and activities that foster successful writing. Peter Gilbert explores ways of sparking students' interest in writing about something moving and writing about something in a moving way. And Paul Kalkstein's essay on grading emphasizes the fact that our main goal as teachers is not, in fact, to *grade* writing but to *teach* writing. His innovative approach serves the function of assessing quality while not discouraging or limiting the writer. He also offers a grading style which actually encourages dialogue between students and their drafts. All five essays explore ways for students' writing to take on a new vitality and interest.

In his second section on Introductory Literature Courses, Thorn compiles essays that focus on the need for expressive writing in the secondary classroom even when studying literature. Two of the five essays offer alternative ways of looking at and writing about literature. Lynn Kelly suggests that personal writing is a valid way of responding to a text and that such writing might have a positive effect on the critical essays that students write later. Kevin O'Connor offers a theory as to why personal writing is an appropriate way of approaching literature, explaining that expository writing does not reflect the reader's gradual process of emotional and intellectual discovery. Craig Thorn suggests that teachers accept creative contributions as forms of prewriting so that students at least have this opportunity to make literature and the writing their own. These opportunities to connect with the literature and to write about that connection in a variety of ways.

The third section of this text includes essays which deal more specifically with a particular theory or course design. This section may appeal to the teacher who has a lot of freedom in his/her class to design the curriculum or try innovative teaching strategies. Ada Fan's essay outlines the advantages for using film to teach narrative techniques; John Gould offers a set of exercises teaching students how to show rather that tell how they feel in an essay; Seth Bardo explores how students write when responding to politically and socially challenging material; Sheila McGrory Klyza explores how performing literature can enhance students' interaction with the text as well as contemporary works through a common learning experience.

This book started out a means for one English Department to map out its own approach to teaching writing and literature. The process of writing the essays and comparing ideas and strategies was the real goal of the writers; the book was merely a bonus. And yet it serves as a springboard for diversity and creativity in the classroom. This book does not suggest a particular theory or pedagogy or paradigm. Instead, it celebrates the individual experiences and ideas of each teacher. This book, through its discussion of various exercises, course designs, and case studies, illustrates the fact that we as teachers have the power and potential to make our own courses, and thereby, have the ability to meet the various needs of our diverse students.

ACTE TO YOU

Mary Ann Tighe
Troy State University
President

FALL CONFERENCE

"Hearing the Voices of Our World: Trends in Teaching Language and Literature" was the theme for ACTE's 1994 Fall Conference, which was held at Troy State University on October 14 and 15. The conference opened Friday afternoon with refreshments, textbook displays, and meetings of special interest groups. On Friday evening, following dinner in the Adams Center Ballroom, conference participants attended the TSU Drama Department production of The Playboy of the Western World. The Saturday morning program began with a business meeting, followed by two sessions of concurrent workshops on various topics and grade levels. The general session featured Dr. James Marshall of the University of Iowa, who spoke on the teaching of literature. The conference closed with a luncheon honoring Young Alabama Writers.

MINUTES OF THE ACTE BUSINESS MEETING—OCTOBER 15, 1994

Mary Ann Tighe presided over the ACTE Business Meeting held at Troy State University during the annual fall conference on October 15, 1994.

Secretary Jeff Langham presented a review of the 1993 Fall Conference. He also introduced the current officers as well as the ACTE Board of Directors.

Mike Cordle Presented the financial report as follows: Checking ($8,583.13) + CD's ($6,211.53) = Total Assets ($14,794.66)

NCTE Director Willie Mae Crews addressed the issue of a name change for NCTE.

In her membership report, Martha Wall stated that the organization's roster consists of approximately 415 members.

SDE Liaison Cynthia Brown enlightened those present by providing information and updates on two topics— the Alabama Writing Assessment and Achievement Objectives.

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Publications Director Gloria Horton introduced the new members of the Publications Board. She also informed the audience about certificates of recognition designed for those who submit articles to *Alabama English*.

Leroy Sterling revealed that the *Councilgram* would be a bi-annual production and would see a 100% increase in publication.

Phyllis Talmadge provided an update on the Alabama Task Force for Standards.

During the final portion of the meeting, open discussion was held on the subject of the ACTE Distinguished Service Award and the criteria that this honor involves.

The meeting was adjourned by Mary Ann Tighe at approximately 9:15 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jeffery E. Langham, Secretary

SCHOLARSHIP

ACTE is soliciting applicants for the Paul Scheid memorial scholarship in graduate study in English. Applicants must have completed undergraduate school. Those who are already teaching in an Alabama primary, middle, or secondary school will receive preference over a graduate who has not taught or a teacher coming into Alabama from another state. Applicant must have plans to attend graduate school (or is already attending) to seek graduate degrees or advanced certification in English education. This may be through summer school strides or a full-time program of studies. Transcripts, letters of recommendation, and a letter stating professional objectives and the need for assistance will be required. Selection criteria include previous scholastic performance, need for assistance and recommendations. Contact Steve McAlily at the State Department of Education for more information (334-242-8059).

NCTE ANNUAL CONVENTION

NCTE's Annual Convention was held in Orlando, FL, November 16-21, 1994. The following resolutions were passed during the General Session.

On Proposition 187

RESOLVED, that the NCTE promote the continuation of the American tradition of offering educational services to all who live on U.S. soil and condemn the denial of educational social services to undocumented immigrants;

that NCTE support teachers in their resistance to this and other such measures;

that NCTE send letters of support to groups resisting compliance with Proposition 187 and any future legislation that denies educational and social services to undocumented immigrants;

that NCTE support, as a friend of the court, litigation opposing the denial of educational and social services to undocumented immigrants;

that NCTE at its 1995 Annual Convention in San Diego hold special workshops and protests against Proposition 187 and such measures and inform the media of such;

that NCTE widely publish this resolution to its affiliates and other professional organizations through news releases; and

that NCTE inform its members of future state and federal legislation that jeopardizes the constitutional right of all persons on U.S. soil to equal protection of the law.

On Freedom to Teach

RESOLVED, that the NCTE affirm the right of teachers to be professional decision makers in the classroom;

that NCTE establish procedures for supporting teachers who are in situations where their professional freedom is attacked; and

that NCTE collaborate with affiliates and constituent groups, teacher unions, and other organizations concerned with the professional freedom of teachers.

On Language Study

RESOLVED, that the NCTE appoint a committee or task force to explore effective ways of integrating language awareness into classroom instruction and teacher preparation programs, review current practices and materials relating to language awareness, and prepare new materials for possible publication by NCTE. Language awareness includes examining how language varies in a range of social and cultural settings; examining how people's attitudes vary towards language across culture, class, gender, and generation; examining how oral and written language affects listeners and readers; examining how "correctness" in Language reflects social-political-economic values; examining how the structure of language works from a descriptive perspective; and examining how first and second languages are acquired.

On Inclusion

RESOLVED, that the NCTE urge schools to include all students in general education classrooms, whenever possible, and to provide support for students with identified exceptionalities;

that NCTE urge schools to create collaborative teams (specialists, classroom teachers, parents, administrators) for determining assessment, placement, and the quantity and type of support services based on the unique academic and social needs of students;

that NCTE urge schools and teacher education programs to provide adequate preparation and ongoing professional development addressing the needs and concerns of the classroom teacher;

that NCTE recommend that special care be taken in assessment and placement of students to ensure that culturally and linguistically varying behaviors and proficiencies not be confused with exceptionalities;

that NCTE urge schools to explore alternative organizational and financial structures to meet the needs of all students (which may include specially trained personnel, adjusted class size, flexible scheduling, and specialized materials);

that NCTE discourage displacement from general education unless there is consensus from the collaborative team that the general education placement would not benefit the student;

that NCTE establish and maintain an inclusion strand within conferences on teaching language arts to students with exceptionalities. This strand should also address culturally and linguistically diverse students with exceptionalities;

that NCTE urge publication editors to focus attention on the inclusion issue; and

that NCTE develop and maintain communication with professional special education associations to foster better articulation and integration of ways to meet the needs of all students.

On the Smithsonian Institution

RESOLVED, that the NCTE communicate our concerns as teachers about the egregious omission of Latino culture and history from the Smithsonian Institution;

that NCTE encourage the Smithsonian Institution to represent American history and culture completely and accurately by illuminating the significant contributions of Latinos;

that NCTE urge the Smithsonian Institution to use the Latino population as its resource to ensure the authenticity of its inclusions; and

that NCTE widely publish this resolution to its members affiliates, and other professional organizations through publications and news releases.

To Join the ACTE

To join the Alabama Council of Teachers of English and receive a subscription to *Alabama English* with your membership, send $10 with your name, school affiliation, and mailing address to:

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221 Kent Drive
Homewood, Alabama 35209

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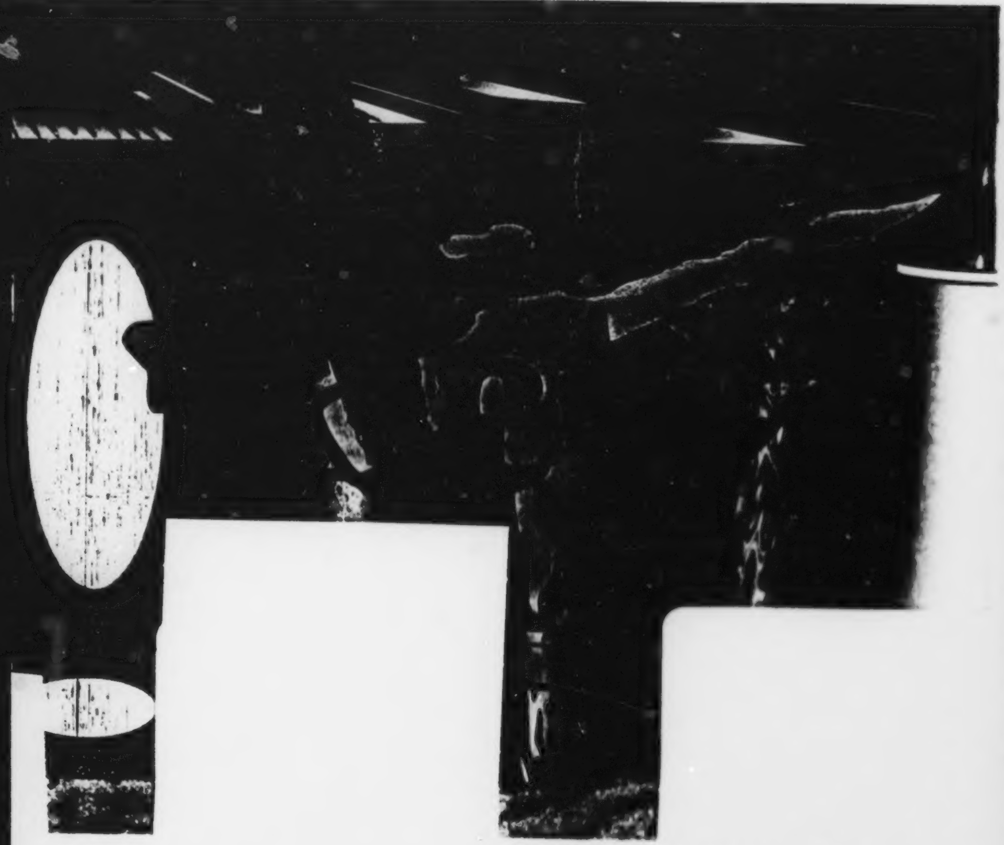

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A Publication of the
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Alabama English

A publication of the Alabama Council of Teachers of English in cooperation with Troy State University's Department of English

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Subscriptions: Subscription to *Alabama English* is included in the annual ACTE membership dues renewed each fall. To join ACTE, send your name, address, and school affiliation along with a check for $10.00 to Gloria Horton, Jacksonville State University, English Department, Jacksonville, AL 36265.

Submissions: *Alabama English* welcomes manuscripts (1250 to 4000 words long) about current theory and practice in the teaching of reading, writing, and literature at any grade level; manuscripts (approximately 1000 words long) as "teaching tips"; short poems that are directly related to teaching and professional experiences; short essays (approximately 250 words) about professional concerns; and reviews of literature recommended for classroom use (500-700 words). All manuscripts should conform to *MLA Handbook*, third edition, and be submitted in three copies. For return of manuscript, enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Send submissions to Theron Montgomery, Editor, *Alabama English*, Troy State University, English Department, Smith Hall, Troy, Alabama 36082. First Rights © 1996 Alabama Council of Teachers of English. Member of the NCTE Information Exchange Agreement.

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FOLK AND FAIRY TALES IN THE LIBRARY AND CLASSROOM

Constance L. Rosenblatt, Wrights Mill Road Elementary School
and Judith V. Lechner, Auburn University

If written forms of fairy tales are "pale and inadequate reflections" of their "true," oral versions (Dundes), then what Connie Rosenblatt, media specialist at Wrights Mill Elementary School does is to rescue stories from the printed page. To be more exact, she creates a storytelling environment in which the teller and the story are equally important, emphasizing both the oral and written linguistic/literary devices that go into making a good story.

Each year Connie Rosenblatt conducts a six-week folktale program for all the third grade classes, which culminates in a three-day Folktale Festival in the media center. Children's literature and reading experts give many reasons for using folktales in the language arts curriculum (Blatt; Bosma; Goforth and Spillman; Cullinan; and Norton). In an interview with Connie, she emphasized nine points which can be grouped into three broad goals: to promote children's language development and familiarity with literary conventions; to broaden children's cultural and cross-cultural knowledge; and to help children experience the pleasures of good stories.

The nine points are as follows:

1. The tales promote language development, extending children's range of expression. In two different translations of the Grimms' *Cinderella*, children hear two common formula beginnings: "Once upon a time" (Grimm) and "There was once a..." (Grimm). A Kentucky mountain version of Cinderella, "Rushiecoat and the King's Son" (Smith) includes embedded rhymes "Pretty foot, speckled foot/ By the shed hide; Ugly foot, speckled foot/ By the king ride," as well as dialect, "She went on till she come to a gate...When she started to go through, it come together and like to pinch her to death." The Vietnamese version, *In the Land of Small Dragon* (Kha and Clark) is written in poetry form and interweaves proverbs

throughout the narrative, "Beauty is not painted on, it is the spirit showing." Vivid imagery abounds in all the versions, while some introduce easily discernible symbolism, as in the Russian *Vasilissa the Beautiful* (Winthrop), in which three horsemen--white, red, and black, represent morning, noon, and night. It was a Korean child in the program who, when hearing *The Korean Cinderella* and seeing the pictures of oversized crickets, pointed out that crickets are sacred symbols. Onomatopoeia, such as "FOO FOO I smell the smell of a human" (Winthrop) are also frequent and delight children.

2. As fast-paced, well plotted stories, with a narrative format punctuated by dialog, often with strongly cadenced language, folktales provide models for children in structuring their own writing (Bosma).

3. Having come from the oral tradition, folktales lend themselves to oral interpretation in which children love to participate.

4. These stories provide both a common cultural ground for all of the children in the program--one cannot assume that children today are familiar with even the most frequently told fairy tales. Stories such as "Cinderella," "Jack and the Beanstalk," "Little Red Riding Hood," "The Pea Princess," and "The Three Little Pigs" are introduced along with their lesser known versions. Providing alternate versions shows children that these are living stories shaped to suit different tellers and circumstances (Dundes).

5. Relating to the above point, these stories are necessary to provide children with the literary background (assumed by many writers) children may encounter; children who are not familiar with the commonly known fairy tales miss the allusions to them. Spoofs certainly rely on this common knowledge. In *The Practical Princess* (Williams), for example, a practical princess takes matters into her own hands, awakening an enchanted prince in "Sleeping Beauty" fashion and helping him escape his tower by his long beard, a la "Rapunzel."

6. Folktales provide tremendous variety. Besides introducing some of the classic stories, it is important to provide children

with other stories that are likely to be new to them and to give children the opportunity to choose stories for themselves. Shared readings are balanced with individual choice. A delightful outcome of this strategy is that each year children discover and pass along to each other new favorites such as "The Twelve Dancing Princesses." Attractive book jackets and illustrations play a large part in the individual choices.

7. Folktales offer the opportunity for cross-cultural comparisons. Of the hundreds of different versions of "Cinderella," from France to Korea and of the various versions of "Jack and the Beanstalk," from England and the Appalachians, many are now available in picture book format. The illustrations frequently enhance the cultural specifics suggested by the texts. Svend Otto's illustrations for *Cinderella* (Rogers) show accurate details of north European village scenes; illustrations by Koshkin in *Vasilissa the Beautiful* reflect traditional pictorial representations of Russian folktales, which are typically set in 17th century Russia (Winthrop). Heller provides carefully researched details of clothing and Korean village life based on museum exhibits and on reconstructed villages from 300 years ago (Climo).

8. Fairy tales provide not only entertainment for children but a creative means for anxiety reduction, fantasy fulfillment, reflection about human relationships, and hope for resolution of developmental hurdles (Lubetsky). Children especially enjoy the happy endings. Fairy tales function for children as they always have, keeping hope alive by presenting a reassuring world in which the good are rewarded, the bad are punished, and the weak become strong (Tatar).

9. Too often adults look for literature of "high seriousness." Certainly the Newbery Awards reflect this perspective. But, as Nist's research indicates, children's favorites are the humorous stories (Nist), and enjoyment is the hook for creating lifelong readers. Children see the irony in such alternative versions as Cole's *Prince Cinders*, in which a puny prince

> gets his wish to be as big and hairy as his mean brothers, but not quite in the way he had hoped. Children also appreciate the humor of the modern setting and word-play in *Sydney Rella and the Glass Sneakers* (Myers), in which Sydney is not a stepchild in the Rella family but has busy working parents who leave him to do the household chores while his big brothers go off to play football. Children are not alone in enjoying a laugh through alternative versions of folktales--Connie has successfully used *Politically Correct Bedtime Stories* at workshops, and believes that some of these may also appeal to older children.

Connie begins with the written text. Whether it is a familiar story, such as *Cinderella*, or one that may be new to the children, she begins by reading several versions of the story. Children are encouraged to discover similarities and differences, picking out common elements such as formula beginnings, magic numbers, magical items, stock characters, and happy endings.

Children act as "folklorists" as they compare the various versions, for instance, of *Cinderella* by looking for: Who is mean to Cinderella? What tasks does she have to perform? Who helps her? What magical items does she use and what is her reward? Each story offers culturally specific details relating to family relationships and tasks, as well as the way in which the story is told. This is especially true for the Vietnamese *Cinderella*, from *In the Land of Small Dragon*.

In pairs children select a fairy tale to read to each other and they search for the folktale elements they have previously identified. Moving from the printed page to oral interpretation, the children retell the stories to their partners, practicing both in the media center and in their classrooms. Several sessions are spent getting the students ready for telling the stories. They practice different vocal expressions, such as scared voice, secretive voice, or sleepy voice.

In one of the media center sessions, children respond to the stories. The following questions, for instance, accompanied the reading of the "Princess and the Pea": 1. What does Ermintrude do that lets the Queen know she is a princess?; 2. What do you think would really happen if you piled lots of mattresses on top of one another?; 3. Imagine that you are Ermintrude, and tell about a test that you would give the queen to find out if she is really a queen.

Visual interpretations follow. These include a wide variety: murals, rebuses, "television" (stories written on a scroll), modern versions, a "Jolly Postman"-like book of letters to characters in the stories, and a dodecahedron with twelve scenes from the story, one of which is a map of its place of origin.

Some of the teachers continue the program in the classroom. Children research the backgrounds of the countries from where the stories come or work on other aspects of the stories.

During each day of the three-day festival, students from two of the six third grade classes come together in the media center. They come dressed as their characters and bring story-related foods. From each class, several students, chosen by their classmates as the most dramatic or interesting storytellers, relate their stories to the whole group. These stories, which had, for the most part, started life as oral literature, are once again shared orally among a community of storytellers.

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Writing Remains: Using Learning Logs at the SUPER Institute

David Chapman, Samford University

As I write this, I have at my elbow a stack of notebooks nearly as high as my computer. They are the product of seventh and tenth-grade history teachers who were asked to write daily in a log during a three-week summer institute sponsored by the Alabama Humanities Foundation. The first SUPER (Schools and University Partners for Educational Renewal) Institute, held in the summer of 1993, focused on cultural boundaries, such as the Middle East and Central Europe. Subsequent summers have been devoted to Asia and Africa. An additional SUPER Institute for English teachers was added in 1995. The teachers who were selected for the Institute had the privilege of reading and discussing the contemporary literature of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Participation in the SUPER Project is an intense experience for all concerned. Directors of the program spend months designing the course of study, inviting the featured speakers, and making the physical arrangements. Each week is filled with outstanding lectures from noted authorities and discussions on subjects such as the future of the Amazon and the causes of the breakup of the Soviet Union. Given the hundreds of person-hours devoted to these events, it seems strange to look at a stack of learning logs and realize that they represent virtually the only remaining tangible evidence of the teachers' participation in the institute.

My part in the institute was to suggest ways that writing could be used by history teachers to reinforce the concepts that their students should be getting from their textbooks and from classroom discussion. As the Director of Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) at Samford University, I meet often with faculty in K-12 and college ranks to discuss ways of using writing to help students to be better learners. Frequently, faculty assume that the primary purpose of WAC is to produce better student writing. Although this is clearly one goal of such a program, the more direct result of writing activities in the classroom is their influence on student learning. After extensive research on the connections between student writing and learning in secondary schools, Judith A. Langer and Arthur N. Applebee reported: "Across the studies, there is clear evidence that activities involving writing (*any* of the many sorts of writing we studied) lead to better learning than reading and studying only. Writing assists learning" (135).

Although the conclusion of Langer and Applebee may border on the obvious to some (after all, isn't that why we've been assigning writing all these years?), there are many teachers who still think of writing as an exercise in linguistic etiquette or in research techniques or in selecting and organizing other people's ideas. Even an accomplished writer, such as William Zinsser, acknowledges that the importance of writing in the learning process was a revelation to him: "The light bulb went on over my head at this discovery. . . . I saw that "writing across the curriculum" wasn't just a method of getting students to write who were afraid of writing. It was also a method of getting students to learn who were afraid of learning" (ix). I knew that one of my major goals in working with these history teachers must be for them to realize the importance of writing as a means of learning.

During the institute I met with the teachers once each week to talk about writing assignments and methods of evaluation. In order to reinforce the importance of writing-to-learn activities in their classes, teachers were asked to complete a daily learning log that would require them to reflect upon the information they were getting through lectures, reading, and class discussion. I felt that such a log would not only help them retain more of what they were learning, but it would also serve as a model that they could use with their own classes when they returned to their schools in the fall.

Lee Odell has noted that faculty are often unaware of the conceptual tasks required of students in a particular writing assignment. He recalls his frustration with reading dozens of trivial and superficial student essays written in response to a standard examination question. However, when he sat down himself to write a response to the same question, he realized that the problem was not so much in the students as it was in the assigned topic. He recommends as an antidote for such careless assignments that we should first try to write our own response to an assignment we are about to give and keep a record of the problems we faced and how we overcame them. This way we can understand the "specific conceptual demands" of the writing we are assigning to our students (109). What Odell does not say, but what is clearly one practical result of this approach, is that a lot of bad assignments would be discarded. One of the benefits of requiring teachers to keep their own learning logs during the institute was that we were able to insist that they write on the topics that they were intending to assign later to their students.

In general, the learning log was successful in increasing teacher understanding of the conceptual demands placed on students by various forms of writing. As the following observations will indicate, the learning logs of the teachers, although obviously superior to a typical class of seventh-graders, showed many of the same benefits and obstacles associated with student writing.

Each day the teachers were asked to respond to a specific question in their learning logs. The questions took a variety of forms (see Appendix). Some were fairly standard questions asking them to summarize key points from the information they had covered. For instance, during Week 2 they were asked to identify five key terms from the lectures on Amazonia and to explain the significance of these terms. Since all the teachers had the same readings and lectures, it was somewhat surprising to see the variety of terms that were considered "key." Here are, for instance, five entries chosen at random from the stack:

Teacher A
slash and burn
exploitation
indigenous peoples
refugia
ecotourism

Teacher B
global warming
biodiversity
deforestation
indigenous
ecotourism

Teacher C
caboclo
Hevea brasiliensis
white, black river
slash and burn
Green Hell

Teacher D
deforestation
caboclos
ecosystem
rainforest
secondarization

Teacher E
location
temperature
rainfall
landform
global warming

Teachers were free to define "key term" in any way they pleased. Some relied on the division headings in their assigned reading on the Amazon. Some used terms that were written on the board during the lectures. Some used generic headings that would be appropriate for any country (e.g., rainfall, landform). And some relied on their own intuitive sense of what was really important. The variety of terms selected indicates that not only the amount of information students take away from a lecture varies greatly, but also that their sense of what is truly important can be quite different. One of the important uses of a learning log is as a means of providing feedback to the instructor about what students are getting from class lectures, discussions, and readings. Any teacher who completed a discussion of the Amazon would probably find such a question useful in determining how successfully the main ideas had been communicated.

After one session, one of the teachers confided in me that factual questions, such as identifying "key terms," were the kind she most enjoyed. She felt very uncomfortable responding to the more imaginative questions. On the other hand, one teacher wrote in her learning log after identifying the five terms: "I have *always* hated this kind of assignment and rarely (if ever) give it to my own students." In their varied response to this question, the teachers mirrored the response of students—some of whom prefer more straightforward questions asking for the facts and others who delight in more creative assignments. When the teachers were given a choice between a factual question or one requiring a more imaginative response, they generally favored the more imaginative question. For instance, about two-thirds of the group chose to write about missionaries coming to visit an African village instead of writing about the cultural traits of the region (see Week 1, Thursday, in the Appendix). Ideally, a good series of writing-to-learn questions should probably include both kind of questions.

Some of the questions in the learning logs also specified a rhetorical form for the reply. For instance, in Week 1 the teachers were asked to write a letter to one of their students who had ridiculed a student from the Middle East by calling him a "camel jock." The letter was to convey the achievements of Muslim culture in order to open the eyes of an ethnocentric student to the contributions of another culture. This day's log was composed during one of the weekly sessions I had with the teachers. The teachers were clearly rehearsing their knowledge of Muslim culture, but they also had fun playing with the "voice" of their responses.

For instance, one teacher played the curmudgeon in her writing:

> Reggie,
>
> Since you seem to lack any understanding of the accomplishments of Islamic civilization, and since I am adamantly opposed to your apparent bias and bigotry, here is a listing of report topics from which you may choose to broaden your understanding. These topics

> relate to Islamic achievements. Choose two. They are due tomorrow before 3:00 p.m. Maybe you'll learn something.
>
> algebra
> trade
> religion
> art/architecture
> imperialism
> astronomy

Other teachers took a more conciliatory approach:

> Reggie,
>
> Your use of the term "camel jock" is interesting. What does the term "jockey" mean? Great! A jockey is a person whose work is riding horses in races. Wouldn't you consider this to be an occupation that requires a lot of skill? Are you aware . . . .

When these replies were read aloud in class, everyone had a good laugh about the "Terminator" versus the "Mother Teresa" approach. Ideally, the institute would have scheduled more time for sharing teacher's daily logs. In his "Guidelines for Assigning Journals," Toby Fulwiler recommends: "Every time you ask students to write in class, do something active with what they have written: have volunteers read whole entries aloud; have everyone read one sentence to the whole class; have neighbors share one passage with each other" (*Journal Book* 7). Unfortunately, there were few times during the institute when teachers had an opportunity to share their work with the group. Clearly, the teachers enjoyed the learning logs the most when they were given time for sharing and feedback in class.

One way to get around the limited class time for sharing log entries was to encourage the teachers to read each other's journals on an informal basis. Midway through the three weeks, teachers were asked to swap journals and respond to what other teachers had written. As well as learning how other participants in the institute were responding to the questions, teachers were quick to notice differences in writing styles. Early in the seminar, despite the instructions they had been given, many teachers approached the learning log as a formal essay to be written each day. As the seminar progressed, many teachers began to loosen up and use the learning logs as a place for open-ended reflection, without the constraints of organization required when writing for others. Sharing their logs helped many teachers to see different ways of approaching writing.

One of the most successful learning log questions led to a lot of spontaneous discussion. At library tables, around coffee urns, and over lunch trays, I heard one question repeated more than any other: Try to recall your own political awakening during the Cold War. What did your parents tell you about communism? Were you ever worried about nuclear war? Did you ever discuss international politics with friends or classmates?

Clearly, this question struck a sensitive note with this group, most of whom were Baby Boomers who had grown up during the Cold War. One teacher recalled that her first contact with Russian culture was through ballet. She found it incongruous that the source of such loveliness could be labeled the "Evil Empire." Another recounted a time when a UNICEF fundraising effort at her church was canceled because it was thought that the proceeds would benefit communist countries. Others recalled fallout shelters and disaster drills and nuclear holocaust movies. In many ways this question represented the ideal for a learning log—it provoked comment and discussion, and it connected the remote and academic to the real and personal. The same involvement experienced by these teachers can be felt by students on topics in which they have a vested interest. In "Writing to Learn History," Tom Watson of Shorecrest High School in Seattle writes:

> Writing from the first person personalizes the assignment. It requires students to understand what they are writing about so that they can be creative with it. This level of student involvement has sold me on writing to learn. Students were excited about turning in what they had created (141).

Some of the learning log questions asked the teachers to write a story or a speech that would convey factual information in a lively form. Nassar was a favorite subject for the political speech. During one of our group sessions, one of the teachers read a speech that began:

> My Arab Brothers,
>
> I speak to you today to ask, "How long must we wait to be the masters of our own house?" The British tell us it is in everyone's interest that they run the Suez Canal, that they have the expertise. What are we—children? Are we to be led all our lives by British parents?

After this speech was read, another teacher volunteered his own speech that represented the moderate voice in the Arab world:

> To My Islamic Brothers:
>
> We have heard the call of Saddam Hussein to rally together as a united Arab world to fight against Israel and the Great Satan of the West: America. I ask you if this is what you want to do? Do you, my brothers, wish to be caught up in a war that is sure to bring death and destruction to all who are a part of it?

Such point-and-counterpoint readings provide a useful stepping off place for discussions—in this case, about the different perceptions of Arab culture.

Each week the teachers had been assigned to read a book that related to the theme. At least one question each week was directly tied to the reading. During the third week, the teachers were to respond to a question about Czeslaw Milosz's *Native Realm*. Reactions to the book were mixed. Some teachers found it dull and tedious. Others described it as the best book they had been asked to read. Although it was obvious from talking with teachers that some had disliked the book, the reasons for their reactions were made much clearer in their learning log entries. This entry is sharply critical, but it makes its point through specific commentary:

> He speaks of his very first memory as being one of war; more particularly, it is a memory of his pet lamb's being slaughtered by Cossacks. Of the memory, Milosz says, "My desperate cry, the inability to bear irrevocable unhappiness, was my first *protest against necessity*" (emphasis mine). He feels put upon by apparently everything else that happens to him from that point on. . . . And from this dubious beginning Milosz goes into an even more dismal adulthood. . . . Though attempting to be the lone voice crying in the wilderness against the establishment, he comes through as shrill, whining, and embittered.

Another teacher wrote favorably of Milosz's work:

> In some ways, Czeslaw Milosz's *Native Realm: A Search for Self-Definition*, is one of the most interesting, unusual books I have ever read. I was both surprised and disappointed, however, when I arrived at this Institute and found my favorable impression to be by far the minority opinion. . . .
>
> His style, reflecting his point of view, strongly reminds me of the play "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead" where the major players of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* are only the minor players, and vice versa. In a similar role reversal, many of the defining events of the first half of the twentieth century are

> played out almost in the periphery as Milosz searches his past (personal and heritage) and traces the evolution of his "becoming." He offers us vignettes in various locations where powerful events are occurring, but always there is a distance or detachment which he maintains: "Artists crave being, a communion with the divine promise inside creation. For them, processions of armies, social struggles, the chaos of dying regimes and emergent political systems simply happen on the outside" (294).

Frequently in class discussions, when a dominant viewpoint emerges (such as hostility toward a particular assignment), other voices are stifled. The learning log provides a record of a student's initial impressions before being immersed in the "group-think" of the classroom. When even adults express their reservations about countering the group's opinion, it is unlikely that many teenaged students will be able to stand against the tide of public opinion. Only by allowing students to write without the pressure of conformity are individual viewpoints likely to be preserved and appreciated.

Some teachers were thrilled with the learning log requirement. They approached me early in the institute to tell me that they loved to write and thought the log was a great idea. But the majority of the teachers were reluctant writers. They generally felt the learning log was a useful requirement, but they also felt that it was time consuming and laborious. Fulwiler in assessing the achievements of Writing Across the Curriculum has observed that one of the persistent problems among those of us who lead faculty workshops is a tendency to expect too much from the methods we advocate. As he succinctly states, "No idea will work for absolutely everyone every time" ("How Well" 119). Although writing-to-learn assignments, particularly if pursued in class, are more likely to create enthusiasm for writing than traditional reports and term papers, it is important not to oversell their merits. Many students will feel—as did these teachers—that such assignments are just plain hard work.

I noted in my introduction that the tangible remains of the institute consist of the written work of the participants. At the end of the institute, I asked the teachers what ideas for writing they were going to use with their students. Few mentioned anything I had said about preparing writing assignments or evaluating student writing. Nearly all said they would be using the questions from the learning logs. What I had written—the learning log questions—turned out to be more powerful than anything I had said. And so, in this way, as in so many others, the teachers reaffirmed one of the basic premises about classroom learning. After all has been said and done, it is the writing that remains.

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Appendix

Learning Log for SUPER Institute

One of the requirements for participation in the SUPER Institute is the completion of this learning log. On the following pages you will find questions that will guide your response to each day's topic. Plan to take some time each day to write a response to the question. Begin your answer on the same page as the question and continue on the back, if necessary. Your objective in writing in the log is not to produce a polished essay, but to simply brainstorm on the topic of the day. You may find yourself repeating an earlier point, even contradicting yourself, as you write. A good entry is much like good conversation—not entirely predictable. Try to write at least a page each day (more if you have large handwriting). Feel free to write on questions you have been thinking about as well as the daily question. However, use the learning log only for your own reflective writing, not for lecture or reading notes. Your learning logs will be collected on the last day of the Institute. You may also be asked to share entries from your log during discussion groups.

Week 1

Monday

History, as it was traditionally taught, was concerned with what happened in the past. Some modern historians have been more concerned with making judgments about our past than in describing what occurred. It is no longer enough to know that Indians were massacred by Custer. We must express indignation at these acts. It is no longer enough to know what happened in Vietnam. We must pronounce a guilty verdict on all those who supported the war. In other words, we have abandoned the goal of being historically accurate in an attempt to be politically correct.

Do you agree or disagree with the statement above? Why? Should the teaching of history be impartial? Can it be?

Tuesday

Based on what you learned in *Guests of the Sheik*, describe some ways that Iraqi courtship rituals differ from those in America. Discuss the positive and negative aspects of each culture's traditions.

or

Several physical and cultural features make Southwest Asia and North Africa a region of uniformity. Account for the features that contribute to the uniformity in the region. Also account for the diversity that exists in the region.

Wednesday

Reggie, a student in your class, has just referred to Arabs as "camel jocks." Write a reply to Reggie, explaining the achievements of Islamic civilization.

Thursday

Imagine you live in a small village in North Africa and have never heard anything about Christianity or Islam. Missionaries from these two religions come to your village. Explain what you learn from them. You may write this satirically, if you like.

or

Some of the cultural traits in North Africa and Southwest Asia have not changed much for millenia, often dictated by the physical environment. This is more so in the rural areas where the way of life of the people is basically rhythmically routine year after year. Account for this relationship between the physical environment and the unchanging culture.

Friday

Select a nationalist leader that you have studied and write a speech that this leader might have given in order to arouse the emotions of his followers. Refer to the specific religious and historical ideas that would be important to this group.

Week 2

Monday

Write a description of the Amazon for a newspaper. Your purpose is to encourage settlement in this region by outsiders.

or

Write a description of the Amazon designed to shock your readers with its horrors.

Tuesday

Choose five key terms related to the Amazon region and write definitions for them. Explain why you consider these "key" ideas.

Wednesday

Write a fictional story about some aspect of life among the indigenous groups of the Amazon (e.g., a hunting expedition, a flood, a ceremony). Invent names for your characters and try to accurately describe their manner of dress, native customs, and way of life.

Thursday

Discuss a passage in *Dreams of Amazonia* that particularly impressed you and tell why you found it interesting.

Friday

Borrow a friend's learning log and read the entries for the last two weeks. What did you like? What surprised you? How did this person's interpretation and response differ from your own?

Week 3

Monday

In *Native Realm*, Czeslaw Milosz tells about his life in Poland during a time of great social upheaval. Is his outlook basically optimistic or pessimistic? Explain your answer with reference to specific incidents and passages in the book.

Tuesday

Write a brief description of the different religious groups that have influenced life in Central Europe. Has the factionalism in these groups been based primarily on religious principle or on a desire for political gain?

Wednesday

Try to recall your own political awakening during the Cold War. What did your parents tell you about communism? Were you ever worried about nuclear war? Did you ever discuss international politics with friends or classmates?

Thursday

Reflect on your experiences of the past three weeks. What have been the highlights (and "lowlights")? What people, discussions, events stand out in your mind? How will this experience affect you as a teacher?

"Extra! Extra!": An Innovative Technique for Teaching Difficult Materials

Gloria P. Horton, Jacksonville State University

In my Introduction to Literature classes, I begin the semester with drama. Among the plays I assign are *Oedipus Rex* and *Hamlet*. Before we explore *Oedipus*, I spend some time discussing Aristotelian dramatic theory to prepare the students for the close look I want them to take at the protagonists of the two plays. We spend time discussing Oedipus' *hubris* as well as his "blindness," and we look at Hamlet's melancholy and his indecisiveness as possible causes for the falls of these characters. The students are also assigned the task of reading the plays. What I find, however, especially with *Hamlet*, is that the students are often lost as they try to read the plays. In the past, I have tried to help the students "find their way" by an almost line-by-line combing of *Oedipus* and *Hamlet* in class. No more!

Toward the end of a class hour the last time I taught the two plays, I looked out at the students when we were in the throes of Act III of *Hamlet* and realized that not only was I tortured by the snail's pace of what we were doing, but the students were tortured as well by the complexity of Shakespeare and an inability to grasp the play at the level I had hoped. So I did what I had to do—I threw out the lesson plans for the rest of the unit and racked my brain for a better way to get this material across.

What I settled on was a collaborative unit which would result in writing to replace one of the essays required for the course. After providing detailed summaries of the plays (I felt students would be better able to read the plays if they already had a good idea of what the plays were about), I divided the students into groups of six and announced that the task for the remainder of the time we were to spend on *Hamlet* was to be a newspaper aimed at a high school audience who needed to be inspired to enjoy reading and studying drama. I gave the groups some specific guidelines:

1. Each group should decide on the format, the title, and the reporting assignments, including the following:
    A. A feature article on the protagonist or another major character from both *Oedipus* and *Hamlet*;

B. A length of at least front and back of an 8" x 11" sheet;
C. A listing of the staff and the names of those filling those positions (this served as a way for me to assign grades);
D. Titles, headlines, and bylines.

2. Each group member must participate in the writing by being responsible for a major section of the paper.
3. Each newspaper must be computer-generated, using appropriate fonts, graphics, and columns.

The groups were allowed to "stretch" the plots of the plays to fit the concept of appealing to a high school audience, but they were not allowed to include things unrelated in some obvious way to the plays. The groups were also allowed to use the summaries I had provided as starting points for examining the plays more closely.

Having set up these general guidelines, I set the students to work after cautioning them that I *had* read *all* of both plays many times and would know by what they did how well they had studied the plays. The groups had two class periods for planning their layouts and for drafting their materials for peer response. They worked enthusiastically and hard in these two hours. They then were allowed a class period for using the computers in the lab to draft a copy of their newspaper. Some students, who had access to computers at home, chose to use this period for further editing and last-minute planning. The students were then ready to turn in what they thought were their final copies to be given an essay grade.

When I received these papers, I was pleasantly surprised at how readily the students had met the challenge of motivating a high school audience to read Sophocles and Shakespeare. Some ways they did this were through headlines such as "Boy Kills Father Then Marries Mother," "Ghost Appears to Son With Haunting Message," "Skeleton in the Closet," and "Ophelia—Teen Under Pressure"; through specialty columns such as obituaries (for Hamlet, Laius, Ophelia, and others), classifieds (Wanted: One Pair of Eyes), and advice columns; and through advertisements, announcements, and crossword puzzles. Each group tried to outdo the other groups in originality and cleverness, and they succeeded in presenting some informative pieces on the two plays while also being very entertaining. The only real problem I found in what they had done was a lack of proofreading.

Because I wanted them to get the best grade possible for the efforts they had put into doing these newspapers and because I wanted them to understand the importance of good mechanics in writing, I made some suggestions for improvements and returned the papers to the groups with the option to either accept the penciled grades I had put on the papers or edit the papers for a higher grade. All groups but one edited!

The Literary Times, *The Ancient Times*, *The Drama Tribune*, and *The Tragedy Tribune* turned out to be such successes that I have decided to use this assignment again the next time I teach this course, not to replace class discussion and interpretation but to augment it. The positives that I saw emerging from this assignment other than the obvious one of reinforcing group communication were that the students gained a better idea of "writer's voice," that they did the reading necessary to complete the assignment and to do well on the test at the end of the unit, and that they had a good time studying writers that they did not think they would like.

An assignment such as this is easily adapted to all subjects, all grade levels. This type of assignment should work as well with ninth graders aiming at a kindergarten audience as for college students aiming at a high school audience. The assignment can also be done without the aid of computers; typed or handwritten copy and drawn graphics can be just as effective as what my students did. I encourage other teachers to try this method of teaching difficult material; it worked well for my students!

Thinking about School Reform Locally

Mary Ann Rygiel, Auburn University

In the summer of 1993, I was a member of then Governor James Folsom's 24-member education panel testifying before the Education Task Force on school reform in Alabama. During the school year 1994-95, I was a member of our school's system-wide Language Arts curriculum revision committee. The committee consisted of representatives of each school and every grade level, K-12, as well as administrators and two language arts coordinators appointed to their positions for one-year terms. These experiences, plus fifteen years in the classroom, have led me to think about the topic of curriculum revision. What follows are some thoughts about the English classroom, the need for a continuing thoughtful approach as opposed to an automatic "cruise control" forward motion, and some bases from which rethinking can begin. I invite my readers to share in this open-ended journey. Consider carefully your own or colleagues' classrooms; let us decide together how we can retain the essence of what is good, strong, and necessary in our daily practice of our profession, while at the same time keeping our own freshness and enthusiasm for our tasks, and always with the goal in mind of encouraging student responsiveness and growth both in skills and in breadth and depth of knowledge, insight, and understanding.

Any school curriculum can and should be re-thought, by analogy with the recursive nature of writing. Both course content and classroom approach should not be fixed immutably, like Platonic forms or Aristotelian crystalline rings encircling our world in a fixed, frozen, unalterable outer space. Many things come to my mind as an English teacher about local needs. We can rethink our own approach. It is possible to grow stale with experience. I know I can. A classroom anecdote will illustrate what I mean. When I said to my third period ninth grade English class on a Friday in mid-May that I would only be happy if we had killed both Mercutio and Tybalt by the end of the period, the Tybalt looked at me with wide-eyed innocence, and the rest of the class was in amused shock at this unaccustomed violence from their normally Clark Kentish English teacher. They automatically assumed that Tybalt was code for Dorothy, the voluble class member, about as sputteringly choleric at times as her character,

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reading Tybalt. In reality, "killing Tybalt" represented a plot point we needed to attain as a mark of progress in what was seeming a Sisyphean task in humid May, rolling up the stone of five acts of star-crossed love. Especially in the face of the student mind set, well-expressed by the boy who said at the beginning of this year's voyage with Romeo to that farthest shore, "Boy meets girl. Boy and girl fall in love. Her parents are against it. It doesn't work out. How could that take all these pages to say?"

One rethinking can be in the area of texts. In ninth grade English, for example, instead of going on wearily with Miss Havisham until one is as creaking and wrinkled as Miss Havisham herself, one could substitute *Oliver Twist* for *Great Expectations*. Instead of having to read the part of the nurse and face impudent adolescent boys who delight in saying through Lord Capulet "Peace, you mumbling fool!" one can substitute Shakespeare comedies such as *Midsummer Night's Dream* or *Two Gentlemen of Verona* for *Romeo and Juliet*. Likewise, in senior English, perhaps it is unnecessary for the teacher and class together to discuss each and every Renaissance poem and poet in excruciating detail. A careful selection of texts through which students can gain greater facility in literary critical analysis and comparison/contrast techniques is preferable to endless teacher-led whole class exegesis in which the displayed innards of poems begin to resemble the formaldehyde-pickled parts of anatomy lab specimens. Moreover, given the abundance of talent and the availability of texts by minority writers in both American literary history and in the twentieth century post-colonial British literary scene, the classroom teacher has a rich diversity of material to draw on for the purposes of adding variety and vitality to the classroom.

Another rethinking is in the area of classroom assignment structuring. Because students seem to enjoy group work, a teacher can carefully develop assignments and activities which allow for this collective approach. However, I think that grading group work needs to be carefully thought out ahead of time. McDougal, Littell & Company has an excellent set of essays on this topic in a booklet on classroom issues. Group work varies significantly from topic to topic, so that a set of grading protocols may need to be developed. For example, in mock trials each person's performance is separate, and yet a defense or prosecution team, including witnesses, can seem better prepared than others. The role of attorney allows for much more scope than the role of witness. Likewise, in a skit developed from a novel text, one person may have a much better mastery of lines than others. Another may have a better costume. A third may have done extensive work on setting. By contrast, in a historical report, one report may be submitted, generally requiring one grade unless the teacher has specified ahead of time roles for reporters, such as fact-gathering, drafting, proofreading, presenting.

A third area in which rethinking is necessary is to eliminate block thinking. For example, the ninth grade Macmillan chapter on punctuation is extremely thorough, covering 13 punctuation marks in 12 exercises. Since I find that most student errors occur with the use or misuse of the comma, this would be an area to zero in on. The use of the comma could also profitably be tied in with later material on clauses and run-on sentences.

A fourth area requiring rethinking is the grading of student papers. English is highly labor-intensive work. In picking through a student paper, one might see as many offending seeds to remove as in a cotton boll. Some false models have been presented to English teachers over time, including the popular Kirby-Liner *Inside Out*.[1] The approach advocated in this book is so arduous that I cannot believe it can be sustained over the long haul of a twenty-five year teaching career in a public school with loads of 125 students. Hence, I would make several suggestions. One is a vigorous advocacy of the NCTE position on classroom load for the English teacher—four classes with a daily maximum of 100 students. (See, for example, William L. Smith's *Class Size And English In the Secondary School*, NCTE, 1986.) One is temperate, community sensitive advocacy for the NCTE position on grading—not everything needs to be caught in a paper grading. I think the position needs to be negotiated in individual communities. Some parents consider a teacher negligent who lets errors slide by. Also, the business community takes errors very seriously. (See, for example, Rei Noguchi's *Grammar and the Teaching of Writing, NCTE*, 1991, page 25.) So do some colleges and community colleges.

A final area teachers might wish to think about, either English teachers in the context of teaching writing or other subject teachers, is that teaching roles are in conflict at times. The teacher as coach (Kirby-Liner written commentator) is warm and encouraging. At odds with that, at least from the student perspective, is the teacher as judge/grader. How to reconcile these differing roles is a matter for reflection. Peter Elbow's work on this topic, "Embracing Contraries in the Teaching Process,"[2] is helpful and thought-provoking.

In working with the population which we are given, rather than longing for some remote and golden ideal, I think teacher time would be well-spent, whether alone or in teaching teams or pods, in developing a set of defensible, sound classroom policies, a set of irreducible minimums which the teacher must have in order to conduct class and reach classroom goals efficiently and to a maximum degree. I consider the irreducible minimums to include promptness to class, doing assigned work (whether reading or writing) and promptness in turning in written work, attentiveness to the teacher and classmates, bringing books and supplies to class, and observation of an honesty code with regard to one's work.

Spending time wisely, an old teacher saw, is relevant to day-to-day classroom business as well as to occasional behavioral vagaries in the classroom. For example, if teachers have in mind a sense of how much time during a semester is going to be spent on a topic, that percentage of time reasonably translates into a number of points for tests and graded assignments during the grading period. Small amounts of classroom instructional time should not lead to major, heavily weighted tests, nor should topics and skills commanding large amounts of classroom instructional time be blithely ignored when it comes to grading and testing.

Teachers who give many five and ten point grades may even want to ask themselves whether the time spent checking such papers and recording such grades is worth it. Other, more efficient ways of encouraging students to continue doing the classwork can be sought. One example is to rethink the collecting of assigned questions at the end of a reading assignment. It might be far better to simply give a quiz based on the questions, selecting, say, two or three rather than grading a set of eight to ten questions. This way students who are getting their grades by copying might be stopped, too.

Students readily, instinctively recognize a principle of proportionality in the economy of their behavior, as well. Assistant principals, who usually are the front line on disciplinary matters, have stories to tell about fights that erupt in school because of the pressure exerted on potential antagonists by the presence or impromptu formation of a crowd wishing to see violent resolutions to disputes. Students will say after a fight which might even astonish them on reflection afterwards, "Once the crowd was there, I had no choice." Another common precursor to a fight is contained in the statements, "But my friends had told me . . .," "My friends heard . . .," or "My friends thought . . . ."

In this essay I have suggested broadly some ways in which the curriculum can be reexamined for change. I have also discussed the importance of classroom policies which can be uniformly administered and provide security for the entire classroom population which the teacher encounters. Being open to change--and actually changing--but also establishing irreducible minimums will give the teacher the feeling of being anchored. This sense of place and purpose is extremely important in weathering the storms sure to be encountered during the inky blue odyssey of year in an English classroom.

Notes

[1] Kirby, Dan, and Tom Liner with Ruth Vinz. *Inside Out: Developmental Strategies for Teaching Writing*. 2nd ed. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1988.

[2] Elbow, Peter. *Embracing Contraries: Exploration in Learning and Teaching*. NY: Oxford UP, 1986.

Super-Effective Communication

Andrei Aleinikov, Troy State University at Montgomery

It might seem strange to an outsider, but from the very first day of teaching an Effective Communication class, I constantly mention and maintain interest in what is called Super-Effective Communication. There are several reasons for this.

Very often, while speaking about "effective" communication, we mean nothing more than elementary skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking, and we address the lack of these skills in entry level university students in an Effective Communications course. We help them to climb out of a sub-effective communication level to the level of effective communication, and above the level of effective communication, there resides the level of super-effective communication. Generally speaking, on a scale of 0 to 100, approximately 20% to 30% of people communicate at the sub-level; approximately 50% to 60% communicate at the effective level; and approximately 20% communicate at the super-effective level of communication. Super-successful individuals communicate at this higher level of communication. Their ability to communicate brings them success after success. These people are our leaders, stars or geniuses, but seldom is their success attributed directly to super-effective communication. An example of one of these individuals can be found in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, (June 16, 1995) where Cornell University's President, Frank Rhodes, helped raise $1.25 billion for the university and was deemed a "Fund-Raising Master." The article emphasized his highly developed communication skills: his personal touch, his British accent, his tireless passion for Cornell, his philosophy of "Creating the Future," his intense interest in people, his memory for names and faces, his daily writing of thank you notes to people he had met that day, his file of interesting quotes, anecdotes, and jokes which he relied on for speeches, and, finally, his energetic, good-natured character which allowed him to travel, to meet and greet people and to have fun at his job. He is, without question, a master of communication.

Do our students need such skills? Sure they do. It is embarrassing to individuals when they are afraid of their own poor reading, spelling, and writing, or when they are frightened of speaking in public. These are essential skills. But are super-effective skills indispensable for success in life? I believe so. For the most part our students are working adults. They need to reestablish an interest in learning; they need classes that are attractive to them at the university level; they need urgent help in their own lives, on the job, and most importantly, they need our help now, not after four or more years.

To this end I want students to start their improvement process at once, to solve their life problems right away. I want our classes to help them while our classes are in process. I want them to see today the highly positive results of today's studies, and for them to have a desire to come to class, a desire to participate and a will to succeed. I want them to be invigorated and for them to strive for further and higher levels of education, knowing that there are many tools for bettering their everyday lives--language and communication being two of the most powerful available. I want students to see the enlightening power of education. Do I want too much? Maybe. But it is only because I love them. I hate to see them suffering, and I want their success more than mine--not normal success with only sufficient skills, but above normal success with super-effective skills. The concepts that follow help students to realize their unlimited potential for success in this and the next century, and for them to believe in their unlimited power.

What do I start with? In our first session, in order to figure out existing problems, I ask students whether or not they have difficulties or poor relationships with their children or parents, if they quarrel with their spouses, if they have ever lost a friend, or if they have recently changed jobs? Along with other valid extenuating circumstances, we also entertain the assumption that the inability to communicate effectively might have somehow contributed adversely to the outcome of their specific encounter, whether with family, coworker, or employer. The inability to communicate leads to catastrophe. I want students to have the tools of effective communication so that they will be able to lift themselves beyond exterior constraints that might inadvertently prevent them from attaining their goals, and at the same time, I want students to know that the level we start at is only the first step to the next level: the level of super-effective communication, where their lives become a challenging and triumphant climb to the top of the mountain called "Success."

What do I teach them? Within a very structured and well organized course of Effective Communication (credit goes to Dr. Jo Anne Bryant at TSUM) which has tests, quizzes, and videos., I take every opportunity to give students a wide range of experience in nonverbal communication (proxemics and kinesics), special exercises for remembering up to twenty names at once, and powerful methods of problem solving. I teach students elements of the "games that people play" and the types of "people that play games" (Bern). I teach students to apply the basics of neuro-linguistics (Luria). I teach students a love of their language and the basic elements of creative linguistics (Aleinikov). I teach students the art of empathy and an ever growing interest in people. I teach students to set goals and to master self-improvement techniques, and I teach students to conquer their fears (Kopmeye; Rachman).What methods do I use? I use various methods taken from systems that unleash creativity starting from an ancient morphological matrix (Rimund Lulliy, 14th cen.), touching slightly on the systems of Guilford, Davis, Altshuller, and finishing with my own methods developed within the system of Creative Pedagogy (Aleinikov).

What problems do we solve? We address personal, technical, educational, administrative, social, and any other problems that arise in or after class. Does this seem impossible? The process of creative teaching boosts creativity, and creativity applied to any subject brings unbelievable results.

What new results do we have? The main positive result is that the students are involved in the joy of learning. They call it "fun." They strive for learning more and more. They know that the way up follows the path of improving their communication skills, and they begin to believe in themselves and in a better future.

In teaching effective communication, am I aiming too high? Am I doing something I am not supposed to do? Maybe. But when a student comes up to me and says, "During the first two weeks in this class I learned more than I did during twelve years of high school" I feel that the methods work. When a once adamant skeptic comes up to me at the end of the course to inform me that she has chosen psychology as her major and says, "You helped me, and I want to help others," I feel encouraged. When a mother of a student comes to me in tears and says I saved her daughter because she wants to learn again, I feel that I will continue to teach. Every new group, every new student, helped by the process only corroborates the need for super-effective communication. So, maybe one day, we'll start a new course and give it the title it deserves: Super-Effective Communication.

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Carpet Time

Reeda H. Betts, Troy State University

I am a graduate student enrolled in an English Education program, but I also have a temporary teaching position. This experience is wonderful because I have the opportunity to study and then to experiment with various teaching methods. I survey the ones that seem to be most beneficial, rethink, and sometimes discard those that seem not to work at all. In retrospect, I am pleased with many aspects of the endeavor. However, one activity emerged as an immediate success and became a crucial part of our classroom experience. Though I have vowed to implement this method into my future classroom, I must admit that I discovered its potential solely by accident.

During the first grading period, I asked my seniors to read William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily." They came rushing in the room the next day saying the story was stupid, claiming it made no sense, and complaining that they didn't understand it. I remembered feeling the same way about literature in high school and was not overly alarmed by the negative comments. When Joe spoke up and said, "Why don't you read it to us?" I decided that I would. As I was about to begin, Joe again raised his hand and asked if he could sit on the floor; he said he could listen better that way. The whole class liked this idea. Joe shouted, "Hey, it's like kindergarten 'carpet time'." I was skeptical at first. I could see the principal coming in and finding me in the middle of a group of lifeless bodies, reading aloud to myself to the rhythm of quiet snoring. But I decided to give it a try. I began to read, and not a sound was heard. Each time I turned a page, I could hear the rustle of other pages turning. Surveying them out of the comer of my eye, I saw they were following along. When I finished, before I could initiate a discussion, they began asking questions and discussing what they liked and disliked. We spent the remainder of the period engaged in a literary discussion.

After that day, "carpet time" became a regular occurrence. We moved from reading works by renowned authors to supplying our own "carpet time" material. We began to write and read our own creations which allowed us to direct our questions to the authors, and the authors, then, responded.

We were certainly not the quietest class on campus. We were constantly writing, reading aloud, scratching out, laughing at humorous parts, sighing at sensitive moments, and discarding papers in frustration. We became dependent on one another, and we trusted each other's opinions. By moving to the carpet and sitting Indian style, we had broken down a barrier. We bonded as readers and then as writers. Both the subject matter, and I, as the teacher, had become more approachable. "Carpet time" transformed us from the traditional roles of a teacher and her students into a community of writers eager to share ideas and show creations.

I am not by any means advocating that teachers take on a "go with the flow" attitude and let the class move in any direction it may choose because, after the initial activity, much preparation and planning went into each "carpet time" session. However, I do suggest that teachers view themselves as students of their classes. Truly, it is our job to set the pace and keep the order, but we can learn so much if we will only open our eyes and ears and let the students teach us how they can learn.

❑

Satiric Points of View in *As You Like It*

Winner of the Calvert Award for best scholarly paper for 1996
Sponsored by the Association of
College English Teachers of Alabama

Diana Smith Barrett, University of Alabama

Probably composed between the years of 1598 and 1601, *As You Like It*, the last of Shakespeare's non-problematical comedies, has until recently been examined primarily through the lens of romantic, pastoral, and escapist comedy.[1] Such criticism appears logical; the forest of Arden provides a convenient plot in which the characters are exiled from the court, the forest providing their only hope for a creation of a home. In the past decade criticism of the play has moved beyond the bounds of Arden and into such realms as an analogical approach by Helen Whall and a linguistic approach by Wolfgang Iser.[2] As early as 1943, Oscar Campbell focused attention on the satiric modes of the comedies, especially in light of the 1599 decree suppressing formal satires.[3] Even after Campbell's discussion, the idea of satire in the comedies, especially in *As You Like It*, still did not take hold of scholars' interest until David Bevington's treatment of Jonsonian and Shakespearean satire. Shakespeare, he concludes, experimented more with different forms of satire than did his literary rival who remained inflexible in his "unified neoclassical theory" of satire (109-10). Nancy Leonard takes this idea a step further, arguing that no clear-cut distinctions exist between Jonsonian satire and Shakespearean romances: "they are essentially and inextricably involved with each other, even dependent on each other" (46).

In examining the genres of comedy, satire, and romance, C. L. Barber effectively argues that Shakespeare moves satire in a new direction opposite to that of his predecessors and contemporaries. Satirists normally ridicule the realism they present because it is not ideal; Shakespeare "represents or evokes ideal life, and then makes fun of it because it does not square with life as it ordinarily is" (152). The forest of Arden and its inhabitants in *As You Like It* are the locus of and embodiment of this problem as Barber states it. The banished Duke Senior and his court maintain that they can live like shepherds in an idealized landscape, finding "good in everything" (2.1.17) in Arden, denying the "churlish chiding of the winter's wind" (2.1.7) that Rosalind and Celia will later complain of. Orlando, Silvius, and Phoebe all desire to play ideal roles of lovers: sighing, complaining, pursuing, and composing verses in the happy wood. For all of this ideal perception of Arden however, under its trees and amongst its bushes lurks the reality of a wrathful lion and a snake. Among the recent inhabitants of Arden, three characters stand out as commentators on this reality and scoffers of the idealism that the court of Duke Senior and the forest dwellers project onto the forest and themselves. D. C. Biswas has noted that the characters of Rosalind, Touchstone, and Jaques are given the most lines in the play (43), and Dale Priest has noted their important roles in manipulation and negotiations.[4] Following Priest's approach, in grouping the three characters together, we can go further than looking at them as negotiators, to seeing them as different types of satirists with distinct but related roles. The play is as much about satirists as it is a satire. During the course of the play's action, we see Touchstone and Jaques as extremes of the satiric mode, the harmless meddler and the harmful melancholic. Rosalind's satiric vision, however, is tempered by her humanity, allowing her to emerge at the end as the play's most corrective satirist.

The role of Touchstone differs from those of Shakespeare's other clowns according to Campbell because in 1599 Robert Armin filled the parts of Shakespeare's fools left vacant by Will Kemp (45-61). While Kemp played Shakespeare's earlier clowns as fanciful fools, Armin's own style dictated that the playwright write for a wittier temperament. Touchstone becomes more of a satiric entertainer, clever and nonsensical. Duke Senior comments that Touchstone "uses his folly like a stalking-horse, / and under the presentation of that he shoots his wit" (5.4.105-6). We see this as early as the first act in which Touchstone uses a story concerning a knight and his eating to comment on Duke Frederick and his court. Warned for his slander, he responds that it is "The more pity that fools may not speak / wisely what wise men do foolishly" (1.2.83-4). It is easy to agree with Barber who sees both Touchstone's role (and Jaques') as mediating between the play and the audience (152), Touchstone providing commentary for both worlds while lifting the spirits of Celia and Rosalind. For this reason Rosalind suggests taking Touchstone with them for "comfort" (1.3.129) in their escape from Duke Frederick. The idea proves sensible. When we encounter them in the forest, Celia is nearly faint from hunger; meanwhile, Rosalind is listening to the lover's complaint of Silvius. When Rosalind gets carried away and begins to think of her own love for Orlando, "This shepherd's passion / is much upon my fashion" (2.4.57-58), it is Touchstone who brings her back to the immediate situation: "And mine, but it grows something stale within me" (2.4.59). "Stale" brings their hungry plight back to the mind of Rosalind who then purchases a cottage and pasture from Corin's master.

Touchstone has a great deal to say on the idealistic pursuit of the inhabitants of Arden. Trying not to show her delight over Orlando's affection for her, Rosalind reads one of his poems left on a tree. It is a wonderful opportunity to poke fun at Orlando's courtly lover pose and Rosalind's qualified enjoyment of Orlando's attention, and so Touchstone spontaneously and mockingly produces verses just as bad, much to Rosalind's vexation. However, Rosalind needs these playful reminders of the silliness of the lover's pose, and as Allan Rodway points out, such satiric darts deflate growing sentimentality (37). Touchstone does not leave the forest of Arden uncritiqued either. When asked by Corin how the shepherd's life is going so far, Touchstone seems to refuse an answer:

> it is a good life; but in respect that it is a shepherd's life, it is naught. In respect that it is solitary, I like it very well; but in respect that it is private, it is a very vile life. Now in respect it is in the fields, it pleaseth me well; but in respect it is not in the court, it is tedious. (3.2.13-18)

Touchstone's seemingly nonsensical evaluation of court and country life establishes that one must view them both in relativistic terms; advantages and disadvantages exist in both realms. Such a perspective renders both Duke Frederick's world and Duke Senior's uninhabitable: one is too harsh and the other too make-believe. Even Celia and Rosalind, as strong-witted as they appear, make the mistake initially of seeing the forest as an ideal haven: "Now go we in content / To liberty, and not to banishment" (1.3.135-6).

Touchstone is very much aware of his role as a professional fool and commentator. After he has returned her to reality from Silvius' defeated lover pose, Rosalind appreciatively tells Touchstone, "Thou speak'st wiser than thou art aware of" (2.4.54), to which he teasingly replies, "Nay, I shall never be aware of mine own / wit till I break my shins against it" (55-56). Of course he understands how his satire will be received; this is the source of his pleasure and the audience's in his encounter with the satirist who is too much aware of himself, Jaques. What distinguishes Touchstone from Jaques is that Touchstone's role does not encompass his entire identity. He can enjoy the analysis of his surroundings, whether in the court or in the country, but he can join those surroundings as well. The more we see Touchstone with Audrey, the less we see of Touchstone the satirist (except of course in the highly irresistible gibes at Audrey's expense). He moves into the lovers' world at the end with the "rest of the country copulatives" (5.4.56), as Rosalind does, but there is a distinct difference in their relationships. Rosalind has successfully moved away from sentimentality; Touchstone has moved into the realm of silliness and animal desire, but appears fully aware of it: "As the ox hath his bow, sir, the horse his / curb. and the falcon her bells, so man hath his desires" (3.3.73-74). While he may be critical of all the romantic intrigue in the forest, when the opportunity arises, he will not fail to seize it and join the others. While this may be Shakespeare's method of dismissing him at the end so that Rosalind can emerge, it is not nearly as harsh as the fate of Jaques.

Alan Rickman has claimed that Jaques as a character "seeks. . . and interferes but he doesn't do" (76). Philip Burton calls him an exercise in pure character study (175), and critics have by no means overlooked him.[5] We do not see Jaques at first; we hear of him, as one of Duke Senior's lords describes him in the forest, weeping over a slain deer. Duke Senior eagerly asks "Did he not moralize this spectacle?" (2.1.44). We find out in the course of the play that there is not a single action that comes his way that is left unmoralized. Yet his brand of moralizing or satire is of a decidedly melancholic bent; he tells Amiens that he "can suck melancholy out of a song as a weasel sucks eggs" (2.5.11-12). Touchstone also uses an image of eggs in calling Corin an "illroasted" one (3.2.35). Yet while both seem to be able to infinitely "suck" and satirize, only Touchstone can leave the identity of the satirist for the pleasures of marriage, base as it is.

Touchstone's satire, compared to Jaques', is much more amusing and corrective; Jaques' appears sinister and foreboding. After an encounter with Touchstone, Jaques returns to the Duke to demand the status of professional fool:

> Invest me in my motely; give me leave
> To speak my mind, and I will through and through
> Cleanse the foul body of thl infected world,
> If they will patiently receive my medicine. (2.7.58-61)

This is the role of the satirist, to expose, and through exposure, to purge the world of its follies. However, the Duke knows Jaques better: "And all th' embossed sores and headed evils / That thou with license of free foot hast caught / Wouldst thou disgorge into the general world" (2.7.67-69). The image of Jaques' satire is indeed grotesque, that of sucking out life and vomiting it back on the world. Devon L. Hodges reminds us that Jaques' name is associated with "jakes," a privy and "the useless debris of man" (64), and concludes that his method of satire is not to expose and purge but rather to "cover up the world with images of himself, with the debris of his own corrupt life" (60). Jaques even confesses that his melancholy is his own creation, "compounded of many simples, extracted from many / objects, and indeed the sundry contemplation of my travels, in which my / often rumination wraps me in a /most humorous sadness" (4.1.16-19). He claims he loves melancholy "better than laughing" (4), and Rosalind's response is that of a satirist satirizing another satirist: "Those that are in extremity of either are / abominable fellows and betray themselves to every / modern censure worse than drunkards" (5-7). More so than Rosalind or Touchstone, Jaques appears to have traveled more and seen more of life which provides him with comparisons and contrasts for what he finds in Arden. Campbell believes that Jaques suffers from what was thought a real disorder in the Renaissance, that of traveler's melancholy.[6] Rosalind sees Jaques' life then not as one rich from experience, but as one that has come to nothing: "Then to have seen much and to / have nothing is to have rich eyes and poor hands" (22-23). If Burton and Rickman can assert that Jaques' satire does not "do," then we can certainly agree with the Duke and Rosalind that Jaques' perspective is also potentially harmful because it is too self-referential, too much of an all-consuming identity that he can never relinquish or that the reconciliations at the end can touch. If we must choose between the extremes of Touchstone's foolery and Jaques' melancholy, we would choose with Rosalind: "I had / rather have a fool to make me merry than experience / to make me sad" (4.1.25-27).

This of course does not mean that Jaques lacks a measure of comic moments in the play. However, these moments, one with Orlando and one with Touchstone, only confirm in a very wry and bitter way Jaques' eventual exclusion from society. Encountering Orlando, Jaques claims he wants to be left alone; on perceiving Orlando's "nimble wit" (3.2.272), Jaques invites Orlando to stay and "rail against our mistress the world and all our / misery" (274-75). Orlando, the courtly lover, shows some surprising maturity at this point in the play: "I will chide no breather in the world but / myself, against whom I know most faults" (276-77). Jaques, disgusted to find another idealist, claims Orlando's primary fault is love, to which

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Orlando delivers a parting shot worthy of Touchstone or Rosalind: "'Tis a fault I will not change for your best / virtue" (279-80). Orlando knows he is a fool for love (Hassel 116-17), but his folly can be corrected. Jaques' satire becomes his folly, as Touchstone has fun with him in a discussion of time in 2.7. Hassel has pointed out that Touchstone is superbly aping Jaques' melancholy (115); Campbell sees Jaques here as the satirist satirized (51), which is an attribute to Touchstone's wit since Jaques is delighted with him. The other characters in the play are busy finding something or someone; Jaques can only find his own created miserable self.

Rosalind is the figure of common sense in the play (Rodway 103). Though a woman in love, she displays an amazing amount of control and patience in dealing with the hardships of the forest and in dealing with a lover who needs gentle guidance. Compared to her other fellow satirists, she is the most balanced of the three. She is a romantic with a few flights of fancy corrected by Touchstone, but also a realist, without the melancholic outlook on life. Unlike Touchstone, she will marry for more than base desire; unlike Jaques, she will rejoin the society from which she was banished.

Her satire, though, works when she has assumed the male disguise of Ganymede (Shaw and Stevenson 66). We see a glimpse of her wit in her sporting with Celia and Touchstone at the play's beginning. Once in the forest Rosalind finds many of its inhabitants in need of corrective measures, including herself. Her premise that she will "not cast away [her] physic but on / those that are sick" (3.2.350-51) is in sharp contrast to Jaques' idea of satire; his is not medicinal and manages to reach the ill and the well. Hodges argues that Rosalind's wit becomes too "wayward" through her intoxication with love (56-58). However, a case can certainly be made that her satire strikes its target in the instances of Orlando, Silvius and Phoebe, and, as we have already seen, of Jaques. With Orlando, Rosalind's job is much more difficult because of her personal stake in the desired outcome. Orlando is ready to die on the altar of love, to allow his love to kill him with frowns in the courtly love fashion, but Rosalind has no desire for such trappings. She too can be passionate, but she will not be base like Touchstone, consumed like Phoebe and Silvius, nor idealistic like Orlando. Orlando will die, he claims, if Rosalind will not have him, and to this Rosalind offers a lesson in the history of dying lovers, all of which she argues are based on myth or "lies" (4.1.101):

> The poor world is almost six thousand years old, and in all this time there was not any man died in his own person

> videlicet, in a love cause . . . . Men have died from time to time, and worms have eaten them, but not for love. (4.1-89-92, 101-02)

Her words are not harsh (how can they be to her lover?) but they do convey an impatience and exasperation over Orlando's resistance to giving up his pose. We can never be confident that Rosalind is finished instructing Orlando; moreover, the problem with Phoebe does not seem to have an end unless Rosalind relinquishes her role as a satirist and brings the play to its conclusion.

Rosalind's treatment of Phoebe and Silvius is also designed to produce change, unlike Jaques' savoring of vice and folly for its own sake. Both are truly sick in the fashionable court mode of love that seems to have invaded Arden. Rosalind's advice also includes solutions to the problems presented if only her students will listen: "mistress, know yourself. Down on your knees, / And thank heaven, fasting, for a good man's love! / For I must tell you friendly in your ear, / Sell where you can. You are not for all markets" (3.5.57-60). To Silvius, Rosalind is more stern, since he, she claims, is responsible for Phoebe's vanity. Rosalind also creates an amusing portrait of this lover: "You foolish shepherd, wherefore do you follow her, / Like foggy south, puffing with wind and rain?" (3.5.49-50). Their collective demands for their desired loves, Rosalind claims, are like the "howling of Irish wolves against the moon" (5.2.106).

The marriage ceremony at the play's conclusion brings to an end the satirist's role within this community in Arden. Rosalind has not yet given up her role, promising to all that their desires will be fulfilled. Nancy S. Leonard points out that Hymen must enter to "bar [the] confusion" (5.4.124) that Rosalind's satiric methods of correction have caused (52). Lest Rosalind take up the satirist's role permanently and eventually become a moralizer of Jaques' order, she must relinquish her role and disguise in order to join the "true delights" the Duke predicts in the last line of the play (197). Satire itself, even of the corrective type, like romantic idealism cannot be permitted to reign long in Shakespeare's Arden.

Notes

[1] Jay L. Halio and Barbara C. Millard provide a comprehensive .survey of the criticism from 1940 to 1980 in their introduction to their annotated bibliography.

[2] See Helen M. Whall, "As You Like It: the Play of Analogy."

Huntington Library Quarterly 47 (1984): 33-46, and also Wolfgang Iser, "The Dramatization of Double Meaning in Shakespeare's As You Like It." Theatre Journal 35 (1983): 308-32.

[3] Campbell, 44.

[4] Priest, 273. Priest bases his argument on Mark Bracher's idea of exclusion and inclusion, but modifies his premise to include Rosalind in the "exclusion group." See Mark Bracher, "Contrary Notions of Identity in As You Like It." Studies in English Literature 24 (1984): 225-40.

[5] Shakespeare's source for the plot of As You Like It is Thomas Lodge's Rosalynde; however, critics contend that both Touchstone and Jaques are Shakespeare's own creations. D. C. Biswas argues that Jaques parallels Lyly's character Euphues (41-43). This may be true, since Jaques does delight in euphuistic language, but as Philip Burton has pointed out, Jaques could easily be removed from the plot without affecting it (42).

[6] See Campbell, 50-51 for a detailed account of this disorder, thought to originate from too much traveling on the continent.

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The Creeping Green Tide

Winner of the McMillan Undergraduate
Writing Competition for 1996
Sponsored by
the Association of College English Teachers of Alabama

Kevin Driskill, Jacksonville State University

In a small patch of woods behind my father's house, I spent my childhood, romping in the autumn brown leaves and hiding in caverns that I had beaten into the summer green honeysuckle, caverns that always sealed up quickly. The woods were my haven, my hideaway, my make-believe world where *I* was Lord and Master.

Whenever mother's back was turned, I ran for the blackberry---and honeysuckle—entangled woods. I ran down the dirt trails, snaking through the entwined, twisted undergrowth to the more open hardwoods, where, canopied by the sheltering branches of giant oaks and hickories, I played, a brave soldier or an Indian scout, living, killing, conquering in the vines and beneath the towering oaks and white-barked sycamores. Sometimes I scaled the huge, gnarled limbs of an old hickory to search out enemies, scanning the underbrush for invading Russians or marauding Indians, a pecan stick—my gun—gripped tightly in my hands.

From the tree, I could see the small stream trickling in its protective hollow. It bubbled, gurgled, called to me, and I ran to its call.

Kneeling in the mud beneath bowing box elder branches, I set my toy boats adrift and played out fantasies of naval battles, hurricanes, and sea monsters in the three-inch-deep stream, splashing the water, throwing rocks at the boats, watching them bow and weave in the waves. I would wade out among the toy boats, a bloodthirsty, plundering pirate, or scour the seven seas in search of the great white whale. Under the cool, protective leaf canopy, I stood and shouted my victory over Moby Dick or a Spanish galleon, a small thin boy wading ankle-deep water among toy boats in a tiny stream that goes dry in August.

When I tired of playing, I would sit next to Whitey in his scratched-out depression beneath an old privet bush, petting him and listening to his panting. It was while we rested that I thought the most about Grandma; she had played in these same woods as a child, but did she beat caverns into the honeysuckle and bushes to play in, did she run and jump in the small stream to make big splashes, did Grandma hide in the trees when her father came looking for her like I did? Grandma only grunted if I asked her too many questions at once, but she would talk about the trees, the road, and, sometimes, in a hoarse whisper, of the graves at the woods' end.

The old road, heavily traveled in Grandma's youth, had fallen victim to heavy rains in the winter of '28. Now the road stretched across the flat floodplain like an ancient backbone, unearthed, waiting to be buried again, this time not by water, but by the creeping green tide of honeysuckle.

At the far end of the road from my house lay the graves. No trees grew there. The woods simply thinned out into scraggly pines that in turn, opened up into a sea of honeysuckle. The sun beat down full force here; nothing escaped its pounding heat. The sandstone slabs that marked the graves stood in the middle of the sea, a shimmering island in the August sun, slowly sinking into the green waves.

Many times I sat next to the stones, fascinated, thinking of the people under the rocks and how they had come to rest beneath the sandstone, making up elaborate stories of heroic battles and gruesome diseases. But sometimes, I just sat there, a small boy looking at the stones, thinking, wondering more about the lives of those who lay there than their deaths.

Once, on the hottest August day I can remember, I sat next to the shortest horizontal stone, a rock that would have been about my height had it been úpright. It was too hot for me or Whitey to play that day. The thick briars and shrubs trapped the heat in my many hiding places. No birds sang, no bugs buzzed, even the mosquitoes had succumbed to the heat. The stream had dried up weeks before, leaving a parched, puckering bed, bare except for my scattered toy boats. All of the plants had begun to shrivel from the dry heat, all, that is, except for the honeysuckle which glowed a defiant green as it sprayed over the rocks.

Sweat zig-zagged down my face and bare back as I sat and watched the honeysuckle-covered stone. In my mind I could hear no stories of the people under the rocks, my thoughts withered by the heat of the August sun. I turned once to see if Whitey was under a nearby tree, but he wasn't. No longer a warrior, no longer Lord and Master, I was a small boy alone. I stared at the stone for several minutes, then reached out a trembling hand and gently touched it. The sandstone cumbled. Again I touched the stone, running my fingers slowly across the entire length of its rough surface. The sand particles rolled beneath my fingers, coursed off the rock, and floated for a swift moment, then sank under the green expanse of honeysuckle.

At last, alone, I cried.

Essentials of Children's Literature

Carol Lynch-Brown and Carl M. Tomlinson. *Essentials of Children's Literature*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1993. 331 pp.

Reviewed by Marsha A. Zenako, Jacksonville State University

In *Essentials of Children's Literature*, Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson present a straightforward textbook on children's literature, especially suitable for an undergraduate survey course. Unlike many lengthy children's literature textbooks, it takes a clear, concise, and practical approach. The book is equally balanced between direct narrative and lists of recommended books, award lists, and various examples, figures, and tables.

The book is divided into three major sections: "Children and Literature," "Categories of Literature," and "Literature in the School." It concludes with a comprehensive Appendix of award lists, professional resources, and topical lists.

In Part One, the authors provide an overview of material students need for choosing, reading, and evaluating children's literature. Chapter One defines children's literature, discusses the personal and academic value of children's literature, and reviews research on its usefulness with children. Included is a discussion of content and the range of quality in trade books as well as reading preferences and reading interests, child development as related to a child's literary response, and types of books and topics suitable for different age levels. Chapter Two is a "facts-only" narrative that provides the reader with a review of the basic elements of fiction, visual elements, artistic style, book format, and book selections. The treatment of balance and variety in book selection takes into consideration genres, topic variety, male and female characters, multicultural literature, and international literature.

Part Two presents a discussion of particular literary genres followed by a list of notable authors and recommended books in each category. The eight chapters in this section list over 2,000 recommended titles in these categories: poetry, picture books, traditional literature, modern fantasy, realistic fiction, historical fiction, nonfiction, and multicultural and international literature. Each chapter addresses the genre category through: (1) definition and description; (2) value of the genre for children; (3) evaluation and selection criteria; (4) historical overview; and (5) notable authors and recommended books. These sections provide concise information along with references to well known books. The teaching rationale for each genre is particularly valuable for teachers. For example, the poetry rationale section reminds the reader that "poetry touches our minds and our hearts through drawing on our five senses" or that "poetry can help children see and hear unusual things or usual things in a new way." Further, the criteria checklists for evaluation and selection of literary works are valuable guides, while the historical overviews of genres assist the teacher in placing literature in its historical context. Each end-of-chapter list contains carefully selected older books as well as more recent books. However, the authors note the "subjective nature" of the book list choices and encourage teachers to add authors and titles they deem valuable.

Part Three shifts its focus to a discussion of curriculum planning and teaching strategies. These two chapters address major curriculum models in literacy: literature-based reading, basal reading program supplemented by children's literature, and integrated day and thematic learning. The authors give practical considerations to designing a classroom reading center and building a library collection, outlining a year-long curriculum and units of study, and balancing book selection. A discussion of controversial issues includes the literary canon, censorship, the basal reader, and traditional book reports. The final chapter focuses on numerous effective teaching strategies including reading aloud by teachers, booktalks, shared reading, storytelling, choral poetry, oral response, creative drama, readers' theatre, written response, and graphic arts response.

A comprehensive Appendices section contains award lists, professional resources, and topical lists of trade books. The authors include genre, type, and topic of book in the Newbery and Caldecott Award lists. National and general awards are listed for the United States, Great Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Appendix B contains a list of holiday books (Fall, Winter, Spring, Summer). Other Appendices list predictable books, transitional books, short read-alouds for intermediate and middle-level grades, and children's magazines. Professional resources for literature study and pedagogy include useful books, journals, and bibliographies for teachers.

Essentials of Children's Literature successfully presents a comprehensive body of knowledge about teaching children's literature. Teacher educators in search of a concise paperback for teaching undergraduate children's literature courses should look at Lynch-Brown and

Tomlinson's work. Classroom teachers of children's literature will find the book to have utility as a valuable resource for developing or improving a literature curriculum.

Time for Meaning: Crafting Literate Lives in Middle and High School

Randy Bomer. *Time for Meaning: Crafting Literate Lives in Middle and High School*. Portsmouth, NJ: Heinemann, 1995. 234 pp.

Reviewed by Gloria P. Horton, Jacksonville State University

Time—as teachers, we certainly are aware of it and often wish we had more of it so that we might accomplish all the tasks expected of those in our profession. In *Time for Meaning*, Randy Bomer describes how he uses his classroom to provide "time" for his students—time in which they may begin using their lives outside the classroom to make meaning in their writing. Bomer says, "If any of us are going to learn anything today, we are going to construct that learning ourselves. We can only take what we make" (6). Reminding the reader that English as a classroom subject is only about a hundred years old, Bomer briefly outlines the events that have led to the traditional perception of English as a course heavily bound to teaching the literature of a very rigid canon and to drilling the prescriptions of grammar and vocabulary into students as well. The norm for teachers of English, according to Bomer, is that "everyone teaches for somebody else" (12), often following a state curriculum, a principal's timetable, and a parent's wishes rather than including in our classes the things that will enrich our students' thinking and their lives.

From this background, Bomer moves into a detailed description of the way his own classroom is set up to, first of all, make his students believe that they *are* writers; and, second, give them ideas, materials, opportunities, and genres for writing. He spends time building a sense of community in the classroom through various trust-building activities; he allows the students to create personalized writing spaces; and he provides ample opportunities for all the aspects of a writing workshop (prewriting, drafting, revising, and collaborative response) by limiting his "teaching" to mini-lessons.

In Chapter 3, Bomer discusses the way he uses student notebooks in his classroom, giving a wonderful list of some of the types of entries possible for such notebooks. He describes how he makes the students feel ownership of the notebooks and how he helps them to expand their entries into much more concrete pieces of writing as the year progresses. He tells of some of his conference techniques for notebook writing also. He even illustrates how students can use notebooks as a revision tool. The notebooks become a teaching tool for narrowing topics as students reread some of their earlier entries to find common threads.

After sharing some other classroom arrangements, besides his own, that make use of the concept of literacy emanating from our lives, Bomer moves to a discussion of writing in response to literature in Chapter 6. Pointing out the normal sequence of having children write narration and description the first seven years of school and exposition the last six, Bomer questions the validity of this construct. He advocates classroom structures that allow these four purposes to be carried out: for students "to learn to be affected by literature; to write response statements out of the subjective ways it touches them; to allow their thinking in response to what they read to feed into a continuous writing life; and to apprentice themselves as makers of literature to the literary artisans whose work they admire" (107).

Bomer reminds us that we need to let the students know that we, too, are writers, that we craft our work in the same way they do theirs—by worrying, thinking, choosing, rethinking, and evaluating ideas and writing. He suggests that good craftspersons in the teaching of literacy will have an awareness of self that includes thoughtfulness, tact, and elegance; that such craftspersons will intend that their students become literate and will have high expectations of them.

Time for Meaning is a thought-provoking book which should motivate any teacher who reads it to experiment with some of the suggestions Bomer makes. He is undeniably a teacher with a vision which keeps him always learning, using the successes and failures of the past to move toward the future. His straightforward style kept this reader enthralled from beginning to end.

Writing with Passion: Life Stories, Multiple Genres

Tom Romano. *Writing with Passion: Life Stories, Multiple Genres.*
Portsmouth, NH: Boynton Cook/Heinemann, 1995.
238 pp.

Reviewed by Patricia J. Adams, Admiral Moorer Middle School

Tom Romano wrote *Writing with Passion* for me and thousands of other unconventional, risk-taking teachers. The book inspired me to adopt and implement some of the techniques into my eighth grade curriculum. Romano blends the rich, aromatic beans of theory-based and pedagogically sound writing techniques, alternative strategies, personal anecdotes, and students' writing into a cup of coffee that's warm, soothing, and a definite picker-upper.

I've long been looking for a practical, alternative method to teach research skills to my eighth graders without the traditional expository essay or paper as the final product. Many of the students write the paper in one sitting with no regard to the various stages of the writing process. Others, having trained themselves well in the art of plagiarism find, mysteriously enough, that the reference books say exactly what they want their papers to say. Tom Romano's book, *Writing with a Passion*, has given me a new outlook and method for teaching research.

One ingredient of this savory book is the multigenre research paper (actually a collection of papers) which is a unique and inspiring alternative to the sometimes stagnate, traditional research requirement. Romano formulated this approach about a year after reading the could-be-controversial *Collected Works of Billy the Kid* by Michael Ondaatie. The collection of stylistic poems and writings, although research based, were written from several points-of-view and blended fictitious conversations and situations with documented ones. Romano used the book as a text and patterned the research requirement after it in his advanced writing class. After choosing a famous person to research, each student developed a multigenre paper. In place of traditional research, the student had to infer, analyze, synthesize, transfer research findings, and compose in various genres. These individual pieces evolved into the final product--a collection of poems, narratives, drawings, photographs, stream of consciousness writings, dialogues, and songs about the famous person. Frequently, the student composed as if he were the famous personality, but other times the student used his own voice to write. Through trial and error, Romano has fine-tuned this approach to fit his and the students' needs. The students began using learning journals to "audit" their progress, record data, note references, and experiment with genres. Romano incorporated whole class instruction, group and pair interactions, and conferences throughout the seven week project. Overall, Romano was pleased with the outcomes of the project and the feedback from students. Concerning students' perceptions of research and writing, Romano says, "Most of the students linked 'standard research papers' with boredom, perfunctory reading, and a kind of writing that offered little opportunity for surprise, inventiveness, and individuality." Although most of the students agreed that the multigenre paper was more difficult to write/compose than the traditional research paper because they had to actively utilize the information, Romano's students demonstrated profound insights and creativity in the pieces. Romano maintains, "The multigenre research paper recognizes that there are many ways to see the world, many ways to show others what we see."

Although I want my students to be able to communicate their research findings to me and their classmates, I also want to impress upon them that they can occasionally deviate from the structure of expository writing. Romano concurs and provides practical applications in *Writing with Passion*. One of the alternative strategies that Romano's students used in the multigenre research papers was Grammar B, an unconventional, rule-breaking, purposeful, and creative outlet for student writing. Although they realized the importance of structure and form, students did not have to be prompted twice to rebel against the traditional rules of Grammar A. The use of effective repetition, sentence fragments, labyrinthine sentences, orthographic variations, double voice, and "crots" fired the hands of the students as they pounded, kneaded, and formed their works of art. The repetition of words, phrases, and sentences in poetry and composition fulfills the writer's need for rhythm, while the sentence fragment and labyrinthine or Faulkneresque sentence reflects the writer's stream of consciousness, whether fragmented or longwinded. Orthographic diversity occurs when writers learn to manipulate and use various spellings of words to emphasize double meanings or puns. Similarly, double voice used effectively indicates different points-of-view and distinct alter egos. Finally, Romano employs "crots," bits and pieces of thoughts that connect to other bits and pieces to form a complete thought. Crots can encompass all or many of the techniques mentioned above.

Although there are certainly some critics of the Grammar B style of writing, when Romano's students engaged in Grammar B, they "wrote with more purpose than ever before, paying closer attention to punctuation, word choice, and the forms they organically created." Hence, the students learned more about the rules of English when they broke the rules.

One final, but necessary, ingredient in *Writing with Passion* is Romano's zealous quest for knowledge and the zest in which he approaches life and teaching. The reader of *Writing with Passion* not only shares Romano's research, but also snippets of his life: amazement and joy as his daughter recreates her immigrant grandfather's (Romano's father) voyage to a new land and the alienation and emptiness Romano felt as an adolescent when his father was senselessly killed. Additionally, like an early morning riser, the reader's intellect and emotions are awakened and stimulated by the robust flavor and diversity of students' writings. Romano appropriately subtitles his book "Life Stories, Multiple Genres," because it's our life stories and our evolution from these stories that make us want to write. Therefore, much of *Writing with Passion* is told by students' poems, stories, and sample writings.

Passionate. Fearless. Faithful. Risk-taking. A few adjectives taken from chapter titles that describe Tom Romano and his book, *Writing with Passion*. This book enticed me to critique my own teaching styles; yet, it also showed me how easy and worthwhile it would be to implement some of the practical writing techniques which Romano has experimented with and refined over his illustrious career. Student excerpts, personal anecdotes, tried-and-failed/tried-and-succeeded experiences, and practical alternatives make this book "good to the last drop."

Teaching with Newbery Books

Moen, Christine Boardman. *Teaching with Newbery Books*. Jefferson City, Mo.: Scholastic Professional Books, 1994. 96 pp.

Review by Dr. Judith F. Dye and Dr. Jane W. Hawk,
Troy State University

"A classic is a book that has never finished saying what it has to say." Italo Calvino's words illustrate the appeal that Newbery books hold for the reader. Newbery award winners continue to entertain and stimulate teachers and students alike. Christine Boardman Moen has written a book to keep Newbery classics alive by suggesting ways for teachers to incorporate the use of these books across all areas of the curriculum.

The focus on whole language instruction has spawned a multitude of ideas for using appealing literature in the classroom. Moen offers *Teaching With Newbery Books*, a 1994 publication of School Press, as a handbook for using entire books rather than selected chapters in reading instruction. Her short guidebook could serve as a resource for teachers just beginning to use literature in teaching reading. However, the ideas are rather general and therefore are of limited value to the experienced teacher searching for fresh ideas or for the novice needing specific ideas for teaching with literature.

Moen explains how the classroom teacher can use Newbery winning books for across-the-curriculum teaching in four different reading settings: literature circles, genre studies and author studies, whole-group instruction, and independent reading. Moen's first chapter, "Choosing Newbery Books For Use in the Classroom," details several criteria for book selection, including teacher and student preference, topics of study, curriculum areas, and the need for read-alouds. Moen gives annotations for a variety of Newbery titles. However, she does not describe in a meaningful way ideas for their use in the classroom. In addition to the selection criteria and annotations, she lists curriculum areas and suggests books but does not provide strategies for teaching skills in these areas. Her guidelines for the selection of Newbery books to use in a classroom provide little information. Providing more information for the classroom teacher than her chapter on book selection, the chapter on literature circles is, perhaps, the most useful in Moen's book. Moen defines literature circles, gives

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justification for their use, and provides general management techniques, spelling out the role of each member of the literature circle. She includes four text sets with accompanying themes along with a list of books to use in literature circles. She concludes the chapter with a detailed description of using literature circles to create literature communities in which students and teachers feel "secure and comfortable in sharing their intellectual and emotional connections with literature."

In "Genre Studies and Author Studies," Moen describes how literature circles can be used for discussion of books in genres such as poetry, fantasy and historical fiction as well as for discussion of several books by the same author. Each genre is briefly defined with a list of characteristics. Again, book titles and annotations are provided along with a few suggestions for culminating activities. Though suggestions in this chapter are more useful than the ideas in some of the other chapters, again, sufficient details are lacking.

In the chapter following the discussion of genre and author studies, Moen explains the three steps for implementing whole group instruction and models the use of a Newbery book in that setting. She provides detailed suggestions for using the books, details that should be valuable to pre-service and in-service teachers.

Next Moen discusses the value of independent reading in the classroom, describing three factors that affect independent reading: enthusiasm, opportunity, and guidance. Following the descriptions, are suggestions for facilitating a student's independent reading and a list of Newbery winning authors whose books would be of interest to the students.

In *Teaching With Newbery Books*, Moen has produced a resource for keeping Newbery classics alive. The main value of the book is in providing specific Newbery titles to correlate with curriculum areas and in providing annotations to support her choices. She provides general ideas for classroom activities. Her ideas lack detail and in most cases she fails to give specific teaching strategies and examples of hands-on activities for the students. Her extensions do not go far enough to be very beneficial. The book's value would have been enhanced with the inclusion of specific strategies such as the use of semantic mapping, Directed Reading Thinking Activities, art activities or dramatic readings. Teachers in search of general suggestions for use of Newbery books across the curriculum will find this book helpful; however, if teachers need more specific suggestions or an abundance of new ideas, they may want to look beyond *Teaching With Newberry Books*.

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Three copies, typed and double-spaced Self-addressed, stamped envelope for return of manuscript
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